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HOOD COLLEGE



A Missing Factor in Addressing Disproportionate Discipline: Job-Embedded Professional  
Development in Restorative Practices for “First Responders”

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Hood College  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Doctor of Organizational Leadership

by  
DeVeda E. Coley

Frederick, Maryland

2020

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The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of DeVeda E. Coley find that this dissertation fulfills the requirements and meets the standards of Hood College Doctoral Program in Organizational Leadership and recommend that it be approved.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to four exceptional people who are also trailblazers and motivators: my grandmother, grandfather, mother and father. My grandmother, Audrey E. Williams, was president of the NAACP during desegregation of schools in Fairfax County, VA who until her death, fought for equality for African Americans. She knew education was an important gateway to success and fought to ensure that all students had equal opportunities. Gammy, I follow your footsteps to ensure that all students have equal access to a great education. Grandad, you had the biggest heart and would give the shirt off of your back if someone was in need. You taught me to love unconditionally, work hard, and stay humble. Mom and dad, you push me, motivate me, and inspire me every day!! You supported me throughout this journey to meet this goal that I have had since receiving my undergraduate degree. Thank you for all that you have done, do, and will do for me. I am so blessed to have been influenced by such a supportive group of honorable, loving, and exceptional role models. I hope this work makes you proud!!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

No major milestone is accomplished without support and guidance from others. This dissertation journey has been a long-term goal and I have many people to acknowledge for helping me reach it.

My committee chair, Dr. Jennifer Cuddapah, and committee members Dr. Kathleen Bands, and Dr. Keith Harris, truly were a compass through this journey. Their questions, suggestions, feedback and support were invaluable. Also, thank you Dr. Genz for your suggestions and guidance throughout this process.

Thank you to my family for their love, support and guidance through this process. A special thanks to my sister, Kadira, who helped me with creating a clean and clear visual model of my conceptual framework during one of the busiest times in her life!

To all of my friends who called, e-mailed, visited, brought dinner, and provided support throughout the process-thank you!! You are a small but mighty group of supporters who truly provided the emotional support that I needed during this journey.

To my colleagues, who are also my friends, especially my “lunch bunch” and cruise buddies, thank you for having my back!! The talks in the car to and from work, text messages, monthly lunch talks, reminders about upcoming deadlines, and love and support were so helpful. To my colleagues, who over the past three years who have supported me as a leader, I am eternally grateful!

To the many people who have supported me during my career, thank you. Special thanks to Dr. Judy Johnstone, who supported me on this path during my undergraduate studies at Mount Saint Mary’s University, and Ms. Sherry Collette, Dr. Keith Harris, and Ms. Kathy Prichard who have helped me navigate some difficult leadership situations

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the members of the Inaugural Hood College Cohort. I am humbled to have experienced this journey with you. Through this journey, your influence has helped shape me as a leader. I love that not only have I acquired new knowledge, but also a new extended family. Special thanks to Kathy, Jerry, Peggy and Lura for being my study crew who made the tough times fun!! The inaugural cohort ROCKS!!!

Everyone, WE DID IT! With your support, this dream has become a reality!

# A Missing Factor in Addressing Disproportionate Discipline: Job-Embedded Professional Development in Restorative Practices for “First Responders”

## **ABSTRACT**

Disproportionality in student discipline practices is a major concern for United States schools. African American boys are suspended from school more than their Caucasian counterparts. Suspensions equate to missed instructional time which can exacerbate the present achievement gap. Disproportionate discipline of African American boys has been addressed by some schools through the use of restorative practices by teachers to decrease suspensions. Yet, it is the staff who decide to suspend students who must also understand the gravity of their decision on disproportionality.

In schools, those who respond to support calls when teachers have determined they need additional disciplinary support for a child, are first responder staff members. First responders are key decision-makers who make critical decisions about student discipline that can include suspension and, in some cases, expulsion. These decision-makers decide the fate of students daily, yet they receive little or no training in handling discipline situations. This study tracked the professional development of first responders in restorative practices.

This action-research study, analyzing quantitative and qualitative data sources, explored the impact of a year-long Job-Embedded Professional Development experience (JEPD) in restorative practices for seven first responders with the primary goal of impacting the disproportionate discipline data of African American boys. Discipline data and support call logs from a pre-K–fifth-grade elementary school in a large Mid-Atlantic school system, as well as surveys and reflective journals completed by the first responders, were analyzed. Data showed that first responders’ actions, words, thinking, and knowledge changed following JEPD and that JEPD, using the premise of change theory, positively impacted first responders and that when

first responder lacked a restorative environment, barriers impeded the implementation of restorative practices. These results and implications for future practice and research are discussed.

This study highlights the importance of educational leaders who make decisions regarding discipline, provides suggestions for knowledge and application, and suggests practices for implementation. Study outcomes include an implementation guide and a model for JEPD using the premise of change theory. Elementary and secondary schools and entire school systems can use the results of this study to determine whether JEPD in the use of restorative practices comprise a strategy that will help address the disproportionality of suspensions/student discipline referrals in their schools.



## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

As a school leader, some profound situations occurred that led me to this topic for the focus of my dissertation. To frame the study, I begin with a description of two of those situations. For 3 years, repeated incidents occurred of inappropriate behavior toward John, a third-grade student with Asperger's syndrome in the school where I served in a leadership capacity. Hank, also a third-grade student, called John names, made fun of his parents, and at times, hit or pushed him while on the bus and in their neighborhood. John and Hank were in the same class and were in the same instructional group for mathematics and language arts.

Whenever staff reported incidents, teachers, counselors, and administrators, including me, as a school leader, would respond right away. We implemented proactive measures such as separating the children on the bus and ensuring the boys were not sitting next to each other during the day. In addition, we applied disciplinary action toward Hank, including bus suspension, recess detention, lunch detention, and in-school suspension. Every time an incident occurred, we held a parent conference or made a phone call to John's parents and Hank's parents. As is common practice to protect the confidentiality of each child, we did not tell John's parents Hank's name and vice versa. We informed parents only of the situation and the follow-through that had occurred for their child.

Each time a disciplinary action occurred, we reviewed expectations with Hank, telling him what would happen if he continued to harass John. Though school staff took each incident seriously and issued consequences, the name-calling and inappropriate behaviors toward John continued. Each time school leadership called John's parents, they asked to meet with Hank and his parents. As is customary, we denied this request with an assurance to John's parents that the situation was being handled.

After some coaxing by a friend to attend a training organized by the teachers' union, I went to a training on restorative conferences. A restorative conference is "a structured meeting between offenders, victims and both parties' family and friends, in which they deal with the consequences of the crime or wrongdoing and decide how to best repair the harm" (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2016, para. 1). Restorative conferences are a well-known, formal restorative practice used in schools.

Shortly after I received this multi-day training, I learned that Hank was still calling John names on the bus and in class. John was afraid to go to school and wanted to transfer to another school. John's parents again pleaded for a meeting with Hank and his parents so that the situation could be resolved. After reflecting on the aforementioned training, I agreed to lead a restorative conference. All involved—the classroom teacher, both sets of parents, and the children—agreed to participate.

The restorative conference began with everyone sitting in a circle. John shared his fear of attending school because of the mean acts and names Hank had directed toward him. John gave specific examples of the unkind acts, explaining that the mean words and actions hurt him. Hank listened intently. Hank then had an opportunity to share his feelings. Hank shared how John annoyed him, and that other children in the class also made fun of John. Hank shared that he did not know that John was afraid to go to school and felt bad that John was sad and scared.

After the children talked, the parents shared their perspectives. John's parents, eyes filled with tears, shared how it hurt them to see their child upset every day and afraid to go to school. Hank's parents also cried while hearing how their child had affected John's life. Hank's parents had not realized that all of the past incidents had been directed toward the same child. They were very sorry that someone from their family had done something to hurt another child.

When it was the classroom teacher's turn to speak, she became emotional as she shared how the children's negative interactions were not only impacting the classroom environment, but keeping her up at night. The teacher explained how the children's inappropriate behavior was affecting her home life. Her husband was concerned because she was always so upset by negative interactions and disruptions in the classroom.

Together, the participants created a contract and both children agreed to use kind words and actions toward each other. They also devised a signal to use if one was bothering or annoying the other. Everyone shook hands, walking away with a copy of the agreement that all parties signed. The mothers hugged each other before leaving and thanked each other for attending the conference.

Six months after this conference, I witnessed Hank being helpful (rather than disruptive) to John. On another occasion, I witnessed the two children working together on an assignment in the classroom. The teacher shared that there had been no further issues with the children and suggested that Hank and John be in the same classroom next year because of the bond they now shared.

At the same time this incident occurred, I started being more mindful of my actions as a leader in the school. During this reflection period, I realized that as I passed by three desks in the hallway of the office leading to my office, students were often sitting at the desks. The students were in these seats because administrators or behavioral specialists had put them there as a consequence for some inappropriate actions. When I asked why they were there and what they had learned, they could not tell me; rather, they blamed the teacher or the other child and could not tell what they had done wrong. Day after day the same children were missing social time or class time with their peers. Often, they repeated the same behavior, often toward the same

students. As I reflected, I noticed an alarming commonality about most students who sat at those desks: they were more often than not African American boys. My frustration and need to change this situation drove me to explore options to determine what could be done to address this disproportionate discipline that was happening right in front of my eyes.

### **In Search of a Systematic Approach to Transform Discipline**

As I reflected on the school-discipline teams' response to student-discipline referrals and support calls and observed discipline-response team members responding to support calls, I was struck by the importance of school leaders' roles in student lives and how our actions impact students positively or negatively. Our responses contributed to a disproportionate number of African American boys missing class time and social time with peers. This realization led me to start exploring programs that discipline teams could use to positively impact student behaviors and reduce the suspensions and discipline support calls that often lead to student discipline referrals. As I started to research, I discovered that the disproportionality of discipline for African American boys I was witnessing was happening across the nation.

I started researching programs or philosophies that could be used for ongoing professional development for our school-discipline response team that could ultimately address this disproportionality. I found several philosophies/programs created for full school implementation. I explored philosophies/programs created to minimize negative behavior including Second Step, Life Science Crisis Intervention (LSCI), Zones of Regulation, and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). All these philosophies/programs have merit and show testimonies from schools across the nation on the positive impact they have had on children's behavior and school discipline data (Committee for Children, 2018; Kuypers, 2011). After researching these programs to determine which could inform my work, I chose to focus on

restorative practices. Rather than a “program, restorative practices are an ethos or actions, words, and thinking that lead to a change in culture in a school” (Evans, 2014, para.10).

Based on my analysis, each philosophy and program to address disproportionate discipline had components that could assist in creating a restorative school environment. A restorative school environment is an environment that focuses on relationships and community building, justice, and equity, and supports students’ ability to resolve conflict peacefully and repair relationships that have been harmed (Evans, 2014).

Second Step, a program rooted in socioemotional learning, helps create a more empathetic society (Committee for Children, 2018). Empathy building is a key component of restorative practices, needed to help realize how one’s actions have impacted the environment. Second Step’s teaching of empathy could be used as a teaching tool for the empathy component of restorative practices.

PBIS is a framework schools use to promote positive behaviors. Important for restorative practices, PBIS emphasizes prevention and positive responses to problem behaviors. “Restorative Practices works to support school discipline matrixes by providing new skills to engage with students and staff, integrating with already existing evidence-based practices such as PBIS” (RJ Council, 2016, p. 3).and can help lead to a restorative environment.

Zones of Regulation is a curriculum that helps students foster self-regulation (Kuypers, 2011). One component of Zones of Regulation is to help students develop awareness of how others see and react to their behavior, which in turn helps build empathy. This program helps provide students with self-awareness of their emotions, important to a restorative environment.

LSCI helps provide teachers with knowledge and language on how to respond to students in crisis. LSCI uses restorative-practice techniques in the training, such as affective statements,

the least formal restorative practice that uses feeling words to address inappropriate behavior with children. Like the other programs listed, developing techniques learned through LSCI training helps build a foundation for a restorative school environment.

I chose restorative practices because of the flexibility of implementation. An implementation plan for restorative practices can be designed based on the school's needs and culture. Restorative practices allow for autonomy, enabling school leadership to determine how the practices will be implemented. As I reviewed the research, I discovered little research describing school discipline teams, which are the major decision-makers about suspension, and use of training about restorative practices.

After discussion with other administrators and reviewing several educational-leadership programs, I discovered many school administrators have little or no training on how to respond to discipline situations. As is still the case 14 years later, Varnham (2005) stated, "School principals, teachers, and administrators make, administer, and enforce the rules. ... When school safety is breached, school authorities react by imposing sanctions on the culprit" (p. 1). As a supervisor at the school, I followed the discipline procedures outlined by our school system and based my responses on the school-discipline handbook and my past experiences. As demonstrated by my initial handling of the conflict with John and Hank, my responses, in line with responses from many other discipline-response team members, were punitive without successfully addressing the situations. It was obvious that we needed to change the ways we disciplined children.

The transformative and positive outcomes involving Hank and John, which I attributed to the restorative conference described above, testimonies from other principals and school personnel, consistently seeing African American boys in the office away from instruction and

peer social situations, and observations of discipline-response team members inappropriately responding to discipline calls, solidified my decision to extensively study restorative practices. Hank and John's story clearly illustrates how an administrator's response to situations can positively or negatively impact the school experience for a child. This group of discipline-response team members, who I reference here as *first responders*, are critical decision-makers. I coined the term *first responders* for this group of school staff members because of their importance and temporal proximity to behavioral interventions. They are school staff who are responsible for responding to support calls/discipline situations, processing student-discipline referrals, and providing input or deciding if students are suspended.

In determining consequences, first responders' decisions can escalate or deescalate a situation. First responders are in the key positions of school principal, assistant principal, behavioral specialists, therapists, school counselors, and sometimes support staff. Therefore, the response of school staff when addressing student-discipline referrals and support calls is critical to the lives of students and can impact disproportionate discipline.

Though we responded consistently and immediately each time an incident occurred between the two children, Hank's harmful and inappropriate behavior did not change. Sadly, the children who consistently sat at the three desks in the office did not change their behavior. After reflection and realization of the importance of my responses as a leader and after restorative-practices training, it was clear how crucial the actions of school staff are to ensuring an effective and appropriate resolution to any situation. It is imperative that first responders receive appropriate professional development.

## **Historical Background**

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights 2015–2016 Civil Rights Data Collection: School Climate and Safety (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), indicated that Black male students who represent eight percent of enrolled students, account for 25% of the students who are suspended. Based on these data, African American boys are three times as likely to be suspended as their Caucasian counterparts. The data and the disparities they represent are deeply disturbing.

In 2018, the Education Commission of the States under the Every Student Succeeds Act, all states are required all states to collect data on in-school and out-of-school suspensions. That data was to be included as a part of state report cards. Currently, 16 states and the District of Columbia have laws limiting the use of exclusionary discipline by grade level, usually in the early grades. By the end of 2018, two legislative sessions yielded 20 bills related to school discipline (Rafa, 2018, p. 1). Changes in legislation require schools to find ways to discipline students beyond the traditional punitive measures of suspension and expulsion.

Educators have explored ways to address this disproportionality, comply with legislation, and lessen the use of suspensions and expulsions while maintaining order and safety in schools. For instance, in a research review, restorative practices comprise one strategy to address this disproportionality. Many schools in states throughout the nation—including California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania—reported implementing restorative practices for many years (Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016). Reports from most of these states described the program as successful, measured by decreased numbers of suspensions and expulsions. One example is a longitudinal case study of Denver Public Schools,



that found suspension rates decreased with the implementation of restorative practices.  
(Gonzalez, 2016)

Restorative practices are “as much an ethos as ... a set of tools in our tool belt” (Evans, 2014, para, 10). Restorative practices are not a program. No manual or guide exists and no one technique exists for implementation. Rather, techniques and guidelines can be implemented differently in any school to help address conflict with student accountability. If schools implement restorative practices as a program rather than a philosophy and paradigm shift, leaders fail to change the culture and focus (Kidd & Alfred, 2011). Rather, “the focus should be on intervention instead of prevention” (p. 12). The implementation of restorative practices takes time, training, and dedication for profound change to occur. Restorative practices are “approach(es) that keep young people in school, address the root causes of the behavior issues, and repair relationships between students” (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 2). Many schools have successfully applied restorative practices in the United States and around the world to reduce the number of student-discipline referrals and suspensions (Fronius et al., 2016; Mirsky, 2011).

*Support calls* are requests/calls teachers/staff make when they determine that student misconduct necessitates support from assigned staff and can lead to student-discipline referrals. A first responder answers a support call and helps intervene with students exhibiting inappropriate behaviors. The teacher/staff member often documents these interventions formally or informally. Formal documentation of these support calls is called a *student-discipline referral* or *office-discipline referral*. These referrals are events in which a teacher/staff member observes a student violating a school rule and submits documentation of the event to the administrative leadership, who then deliver a consequence to the student (Pas, Bradshaw, & Mitchell, 2011). First responders determine if a support call warrants a consequence, depending on the severity of

the discipline situation. Some consequences are exclusionary, including detention, suspension, and expulsion.

Student discipline referrals “are a significant concern because they result in missed class time for the student which in itself may portend poor educational outcomes for the student” (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O’Brennan, & Leaf, 2010, p. 517). Also, according to Wachtel (2016), “Human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make changes to their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to them” (p. 3). Restorative practices give staff direction so they work with students rather than simply issuing consequences or punishments.

When teachers determine that students are unable to stay in the classroom, due to unruly or unsafe behavior, administrators, behavior specialists, therapists, and occasionally support assistants are called to intervene. These school professionals often interact with students when they are angry and dysregulated. Actions of these school professionals can further escalate or deescalate a student’s emotional state. These professionals issue consequences for major offenses in schools and determine whether students are suspended or expelled from school. Because these decision-makers have the power to determine if students have access to education, they are crucial in helping address the disproportionality occurring in schools.

Little to no research described training specifically for first responders in restorative practices. First responders are the decision-makers regarding students’ consequences, which include suspensions and expulsions. These decision-makers require different skills and knowledge than that of other staff members and require professional development specific to them.

## Statement of the Problem

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights released data showing that African American boys are three times more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than Caucasian boys, based on the percentage of their enrollment. Suspensions mean missed instructional time, exacerbating the present achievement gap. It is imperative that student-discipline referrals/suspensions be significantly reduced or eliminated. First responders are decision-makers who issue suspensions to students. These critical decision-makers receive little or no training on discipline responses, resulting in consistent and persistent disproportionality of discipline for African American boys.

In the large Mid-Atlantic school district that is the focus of this study, almost 2,600 students were suspended or expelled during the 2016–2017 school year. The State Report Card for this Mid-Atlantic state reported suspensions by the following racial/ethnic breakdown.

Table 1

### *Racial and Ethnic Background in Mid-Atlantic School Systems*

Race/ethnicity	Percentage
White/Caucasian	44
African American	30
Hispanic/Latino	16
Multiple races	7
Asian	1

Although 30% of suspensions were issued to African American students, the percentage of African American students in the district’s total state population was 12%. The disproportionality of discipline issued to minority students is a trend throughout the United States. Though these disproportionate data are alarming, they have not changed significantly

over time. Although some schools have decreased the number of suspensions and expulsions, the disproportionality of student-discipline referrals and suspensions for African American students continues. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights 2016 data collection showed that although the number of suspensions and expulsions in the nation's public schools for all student groups decreased by 20% between 2012 and 2014, African American students continue to receive a disproportionate share of them (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017).

These data are so alarming that elected officials have tried to address disproportionality. For example,

Recently, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education came together to issue a colleague letter alerting schools that they can be cited for disproportionately disciplining students in certain categories. Federal agencies then recommended restorative justice/restorative practices as one way to address disproportionate discipline in schools. (Evans, 2014, para. 2)

U.S. states have passed legislation that requires school systems to address the disparity in suspensions and expulsions. In 2016, 22 states proposed legislation and eight states enacted legislation (pp. 2–4). In a report published by the Education Commission of the States, Rafa (2018) reported approximately 18 states proposed legislation and six states enacted legislation directly related to suspension. Though states passed legislation, minimal direction exists in how to maintain a safe and orderly environment without the use of suspensions/expulsions and with inadequate or no funding to help comply with the legislation.

Restorative-justice approaches impact school climate, student behavior, and relationships among students and staff. Though restorative practices may be beneficial, many school systems do not have extensive funding to hire outside consultants to help implement restorative practices;

thus, schools are not prepared to implement restorative practices throughout the school.

Nevertheless, reports from schools that have implemented restorative practices have indicated promising results (Ashley & Burke, 2009).

Although schools cannot accomplish significant educational changes in trainings of just a few hours or even in 3-day sessions, 3 full-days of restorative-practices training are as much as most principals are willing or able to offer, due to funding issues, a lack of understanding of restorative practices, and an emphasis on standardization and accountability (Evans, 2014).

Restorative practices are complex to implement. According to Fronius et al. (2016), “Schools that decide to implement restorative practices face challenges in development, implementation, and sustainability” (p. 31). Schools cannot purchase packaged programs to ensure a school becomes restorative. Becoming a restorative school requires intensive work and dedication. As with any new initiative, implementation requires training, as well as staff commitment (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 31).

Currently this Mid-Atlantic school district has no ongoing professional development on restorative practices, which is the focus of this study. A small number of school leaders and teachers in the school system have received a range of 1 to 8 full-day training sessions on restorative practices from an outside consultant from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). Despite having an initial training, ongoing job-embedded professional development (JEPD) does not occur. JEPD is learning grounded in day-to-day teaching practice, designed to enhance teachers’ content-specific instruction (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). As a result, each school in this system implements restorative practices using their best judgment and without ongoing support, professional development from experts, or coaching.

This Mid-Atlantic school system, in anticipation of future legislation, planned to be proactive and to develop an integrated approach to restorative practices as a pilot in their schools. Therefore, schools in this system who identified as early adopters of restorative practices are those in which the principal and staff have expressed interest in restorative practices. A group of staff members at the school where the study was implemented attended a preliminary training session conducted by a consultant from IIRP. Supervisors of schools in the feeder pattern (elementary, middle, and high schools that serve the same students, based on geographic location) of the study school collectively determined that restorative practices would be a focus. The feeder pattern, which included the school where the study was implemented, comprised four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school.

The district under study earmarked \$15,000 for the initial implementation of restorative practices in feeder schools. The school district collaborated with unions that, according to the County Teacher-Negotiated Agreement (2017–2020), are the “exclusive representative for collective negotiations concerning terms and conditions of employment.” In addition, all three unions—teacher, administrative, and support staff—supported the implementation of restorative practices and contributed additional funding that allowed for restorative-practice training for 2 years. All three unions expressed their desire to continue to support the implementation for the 2019–2020 school year. Union support is important because they are highly respected and influential over staff perceptions and thinking.

These allocated funds, however, were insufficient to hire a long-term consultant group to oversee implementation, and the district did not designate district staff to lead this charge. The district determined that an implementation plan and professional-development program was needed to assist school personnel with the implementation of restorative practices. A

professional-development plan was created and included a course that I created that would be offered to all first responders in the school chosen for the study. The creation of the course provided an opportunity for me to perform exploratory action research (Herr, 2014) to document and study the implementation of restorative practices with a focus on first responders.

Herr (2014) articulates benefits of exploratory action research which resonated with my purposes. Action research is value laden, meaning it allowed me to address a concern in a school where I was a supervisor; allowed me to make a difference in my own setting. It is a reflective process that allowed me to understand issues at the school and address them. Also, it yields results that will be transferable to other schools. Exploratory action research allowed me to begin to address a need at the school while gathering data and information that would not only be useful to the selected school, but to other schools and school districts.

The school under study focused on improving discipline data this school year. During the 2017–2018 school year, 166 students received discipline referrals. African American students disproportionately received 37% of those referrals. Some student-discipline referrals can lead to suspensions. From the 2015–2016 to the 2018–2019 school year, the number of suspensions has increased (see Table 2). African American students were suspended at a disproportionate rate in 2018. This student group comprises 17% of the school population, yet received 56% of the out-of-school suspensions and 30% of the in-school suspensions. Each suspension equates to full day(s) of instruction missed by the student.

Table 2

*School Suspensions by Year*

School year	Total number of suspensions
2015–2016	17
2016–2017	14
2017–2018	22

A new specialized program for special-education students with significant emotional and behavioral needs was incorporated into the school in 2017. In the 2017–2018 school year, students in this program were restrained 762 times and secluded 223 times. Restraints and seclusions are highly intensive responses to address student misbehavior.

Most research has focused on full-school implementation of restorative practices and on the effectiveness of teacher training. In their review of previous studies, Hurley, Guckenburg, Persson, Fronius, and Petrosino (2015) identified several areas that posed research gaps, including the impact of leaders’ behaviors on racial and ethnic minorities and on leadership development and training. Researchers noted the importance of leaders in school performance, yet performed little or no research on the impact of leaders in the disproportionality of discipline. Notably, researchers have not addressed the impact of training, specifically regarding staff members who determine consequences and respond to students in crisis; yet, these staff members impact the lives of students. They decide the consequences for many major and minor incidents, coach and guide teachers, and are key stakeholders in developing a restorative school environment. This study fills some of that gap in research.

Administrators and other staff who reply to support calls or process student-discipline referrals are the major decision-makers for whether schools suspend or expel students. This



group of decision-makers, first responders, are staff who respond to support calls/discipline situations, process student-discipline referrals, and have input or decide if students are suspended or expelled. First responders to discipline situations impact children's lives in important ways, similar to the ways medical first responders impact people's lives. Like a police officer or medical first responder, these educators' reactions and responses when students and staff are in crisis can determine the future of their students. Responder's reactions to discipline situations leave a lasting impression on student lives. Mistakes, misjudgments, or implicit bias in decision-making could have a lasting impact on lives and may lead to incarceration, now dubbed "the school to prison pipeline." This groups' decision-making on discipline matters is critical to the lives of those they serve each day, though they receive little training, take little time to discuss practices, or fail to reflect on decision-making when responding to crisis or issuing consequences. Actions, thinking, and knowledge of first responders regarding the handling of discipline situations needed to change. An exploratory action-research format was a structure that allowed this study to propose such changes.

Disproportionality in school discipline for African American boys is a significant problem. First responders are key decision-makers, yet there is a hole in the research regarding the effectiveness of professional development in restorative practices for these key staff members. This exploratory action research was performed to fill that gap and provide guidance to schools and school systems.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The focus of this study was to explore how Job Embedded Professional Development in restorative practices would impact first responders and the disproportionate discipline data on African American boys. Two theoretical frameworks guided the research: *change theory* and

*restorative-justice theory*. Implementation of restorative practices requires a change in thinking and actions from punitive to restorative. Due to the need for first responders to change, change theory was one of the components of the theoretical framework. Because restorative practices were used as the strategy focus for professional development for first responders, restorative-justice theory was also a component of the theoretical framework. I used these two theories extensively in developing and analyzing information for this study.

### **Change Theory**

Change theory focuses on how to “provide a specific and measurable method for change based on strategic planning, ongoing decision-making, and evaluation” (Brown, 2005, p. 12). “Theories of change identify the strategies and principles used in education reform by outlining who is involved, role of stakeholders ... as well as the means for measuring the effectiveness of the change” (White & Evans, 2017, p. 50). For this study, ideas from two well-known change theorists were used to guide the research: Fullan (2007), a theorist who applied change theory to education, and Lewin (1947), whose change-as-three-step (CATS) theory is considered seminal by many researchers (Schein, 1999).

**Change as Three steps.** Lewin (1947) first created change theory to address JEPD. Change is a three-step procedure (CATS) of *unfreezing*, *change* (moving to the next level), and *freezing* (p. 210), later evolving to *refreezing*. Change requires a deliberate “emotional stir-up” that differs by situation and defines the objective of the change with the desired period of permanency (Lewin, 1947, p. 211).

To unfreeze, people must be motivated for change to occur. Lewin (1947) discussed “force fields” and that for change to occur, driving forces seeking to promote change must exceed restraining forces (attempting to maintain the status quo). People may be resistant to

change because they have established habits or harbor an inner resistance to change. To overcome the inner resistance, an additional force must be sufficient to break the habit or unfreeze the custom (1947, p. 32). Such change requires people to challenge their beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors (MindTools, 2019). The JEPD provided a balance of new information, an opportunity to try new strategies, and ways to talk about successes, challenges, and failures. In encouraging group conversation about the new strategies, data analysis about the use of strategies and group discussion strategy implementation helped encourage participants to use the strategies and force them to break old habits.

According to Lewin (1947), once people are unfrozen, they must establish permanency of the change meaning that not only should the objective be defined but a clearly established statement of permanency of the change must be included with the objective. ... A change toward a higher level of group performance is frequently short-lived; after a “shot in the arm” group life soon returns to the previous level. (Lewin, 1947, p. 35)

The way to prevent return to the previous level requires objectives and permanency to be established. Having administration present at all sessions, providing feedback about the continual use of restorative practices, and planning with the team about plan implementation for the next year helped develop permanency.

Groups are an important part of ensuring change. Lewin (1947) discussed the importance of group values in helping change get to the refreeze state or state of consistent use and equilibrium:

As long as group values are unchanged, the individual will resist changes more strongly the further he is to depart from group standards. If a group standard itself is changed, the

resistance which is due to the relation between individual and group standard is eliminated. (p. 34)

Change may be more permanent when the group is eager and has a relationship between motivation and group decision-making. Motivation leads to action, and in turn, to individuals maintaining those decisions because of commitment to the group (Lewin, 1947, p. 37). In this case, the JEPD course took place with the group of first responders and allowed for group discussion and peer observation. Study participants chose restorative practices and were expected to learn new strategies and put them into practice. The goal was to change group norms and unfreeze thinking.

For this study, I used change theory to develop the JEPD course for first responders, focused on restorative practices. I interwove Fullan's (2006) seven premises into the coursework along with Lewin's CATS. Vaandering (2013) reported that "In implementing restorative (practices) grounding professional development and practice in a strong theoretical and philosophical base that includes careful on-going examination of principles and practice is necessary" (p. 32). Change theory, restorative-justice theory and the JEPD format were the strong theoretical and philosophical bases of the course, allowing for ongoing examination of first responders' use of restorative practices. Figure 1 on page 21 shows the correlation between the premises of Change Theory and the job-embedded professional development that I developed.

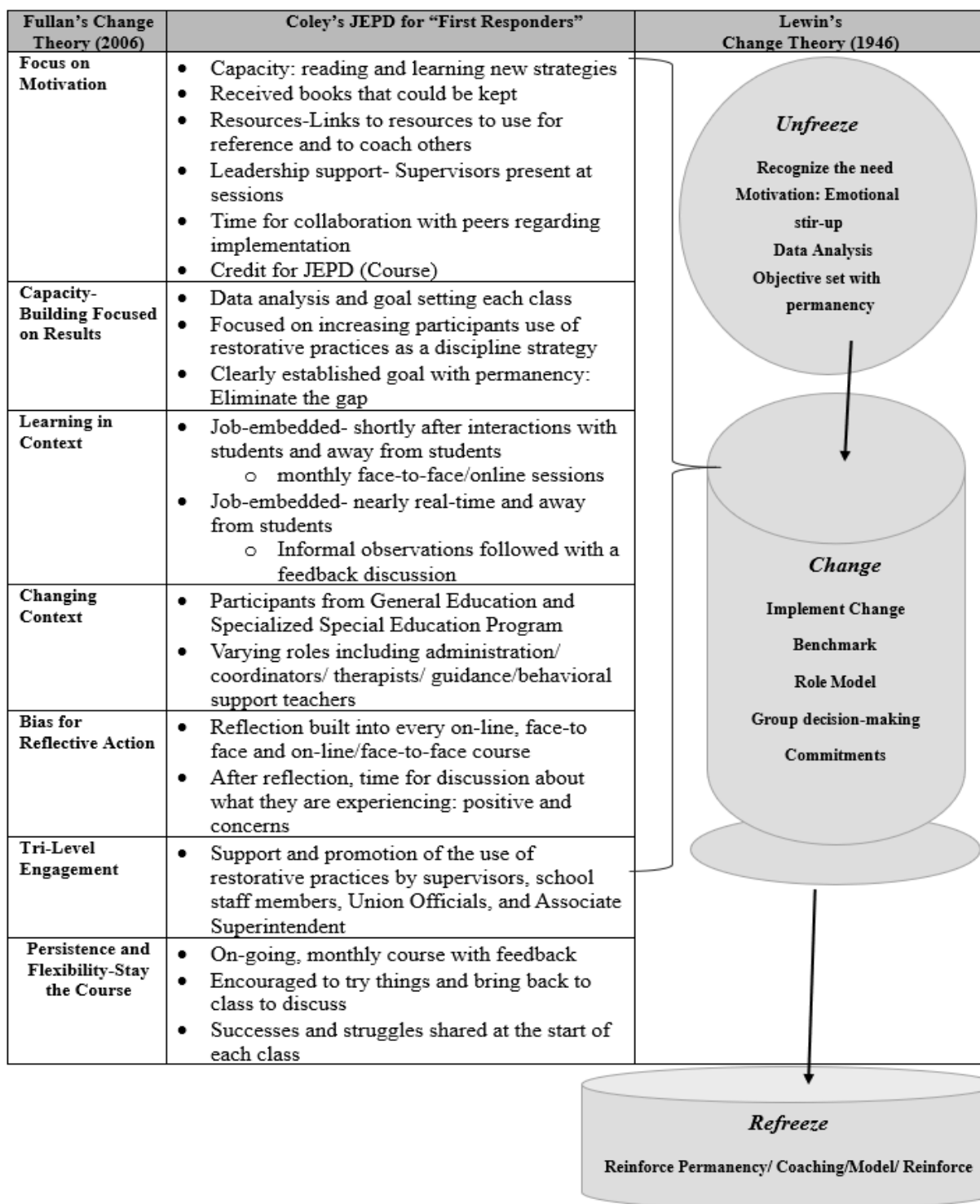


Figure 1. Change theory connection to JEPD.

**Seven Core Premises for School Improvement.** Fullan's (2006) change theory research yielded seven core premises for school improvement:

1. a focus on motivation;
2. capacity building, with a focus on results;
3. learning in context;
4. changing context;
5. a bias for reflective action;
6. tri-level engagement;
7. persistence and flexibility in staying the course (p. 8).

Motivation is essential for any change to occur (Fullan, 2006). Some key motivational aspects must be mobilized for people to be motivated. These aspects include capacity, resources, and peer and leadership support. For the JEPD course at the center of this study, staff received resources such as books, links to relevant online resources, and additional ideas and strategies gained from discussion and class instruction. Participants also received three credits for completing the course. These credits were a motivator to participate as they can lead to advanced certification and salary raises. Administrators/supervisors attended the sessions, providing leadership presence. Staff worked with other first responders to discuss and develop ways to implement restorative practices.

Fullan (2006) discussed the importance of building *capacity*, defined as “any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning while focusing on results” (p. 9). I designed the JEPD course to build first responders' capacity to use restorative practices by analyzing data, learning new strategies, and engaging in reflection. I encouraged the first responders to use the new strategies and discuss celebrations and questions soon after use. During the course, participants analyzed and discussed data to determine if the implementation of restorative practices yielded the desired results of eliminating the achievement gap.

Fullan's (2006) iteration of change theory also focused on educators learning in context, meaning that they "learn in settings in which they work" (Fullan, 2006, p. 9), meaning educators' classrooms. The format of the professional development was job-embedded, which meant taking place in real time and in the classroom with current students, in the classroom nearly in real time and away from students, or shortly before or after instruction and away from students (Croft et al., 2010, p. 5). The JEPD in this study took place shortly before or after instruction and away from students meaning before or after first responders responded to support calls or handled discipline situations.

Another component of change theory is the importance of changing the context by broadening educators' views (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2006) advocated schools in districts work together to increase capacity or knowledge and increase educators' motivation. Although all class participants worked at the same school and were all first responders, many had varying roles in the school environment. Having staff with differing roles allowed for differing perspectives and discussion that could broaden participants' views.

Another component of change theory was the importance of reflective practice (Fullan, 2006). As Larrivee (2000) said, "Unless teachers engage in critical reflection and ongoing discovery, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations" (p. 294). Reflections on current practice by first responders were a major aspect of this JEPD.

*Tri-level engagement* was important as well. Tri-level engagement refers to the school, community, district, and state agreeing that restorative practices should be used as a discipline response (Fullan, 2006, p. 11). In this study, the school and district supported the implementation of restorative practices. Involving the community was a topic discussed briefly during the course.

Last, Fullan (2006) discussed the importance of persistence and flexibility in maintaining the gains. The JEPD implemented in this study provided strategies for first responders, encouraging them to continue using restorative practices, despite difficulties and the recognition that it would be less effective in the beginning, while they were practicing its use. To support participants, the professional development was flexible to meet their needs.

### **Restorative Justice Theory**

Restorative justice theory considers the needs of the victim when addressing discipline situations, and views the accountability of the offender to the community as paramount (Hopkins, 2002; Vaandering, 2014). Several terms align with restorative justice including restorative practices and restorative discipline. People more often use the term restorative justice when referencing crimes or incidents in the criminal-justice system. Restorative practices refers to the broader collection of strategies that are restorative processes (Title, 2009, p. 2). All these terms refer to strategies based on restorative justice theory. For this research, I use the term restorative practices. Restorative practices aid in repairing harm, which means to make “things right with as many people as possible that have been harmed” (Hopkins, 2002, p. 74). “Restorative practices in schools is philosophically based in fostering relationships, strengthening understanding, repairing harm and building strong communities” (RJ Council, 2016, p. 3).

Many schools currently use *retributive justice* or punitive measures (discipline focused on rules being broken and punishments issued). Restorative justice differs from retributive justice by focusing on relationships and accountability that stem from “taking responsibility for choices and suggesting ways to repair harm” (Hopkins, 2002, p. 2). In contrast, in retributive justice, stakeholders determine who was wrong and what punishments should be issued. Some



major differences between punitive discipline and restorative discipline appear in Figure 2.

<b>Punitive Discipline/ Retribution/ Traditional Discipline/ Zero Tolerance</b>	<b>Restorative Discipline</b>
<b>Wrongdoing/ Misbehavior</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What rules were broken?</li> <li>• Why did you do it?</li> </ul>	<b>Harm/ (Emotional, Mental, Physical)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happened?</li> <li>• Who was harmed?</li> </ul>
<b>Blame/ Guilt</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who did it?</li> <li>• Whose fault is it?</li> <li>• Who is to blame?</li> </ul>	<b>Problem-solving</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you feel?</li> <li>• How was the person who was harmed affected?</li> </ul>
<b>Punishment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should be the punishment or consequence?</li> <li>• How many days of suspension should be given?</li> </ul>	<b>Repair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you repair the situation?</li> <li>• What needs to happen to make this right?</li> <li>• What can we all agree is a way to repair the situation?</li> </ul>
<b>Focus on Imposing Pain</b> What can be done to cause pain/ inconvenience to deter inappropriate behavior and keep this from happening again?	<b>Reintegration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What needs to be done to make everyone comfortable going back to the classroom?</li> <li>• What can we all agree to so that this does not happen again?</li> </ul>

*Figure 2.* A comparison of punitive and restorative discipline.

*Note.* Synthesized from various resources from the National Criminal Justice Center of Fox Valley Technical College, Howard Zehr, and International Institute for Restorative Practices.

Because restorative practices are an ethos, implementation is different in every school. “The variety of practices or models used in applying this philosophy have been developed and honed by indigenous people and religious groups for centuries. They have been further developed around the world by academics, governments, [and] schools” (RJ Council, 2016, p. 2).

Stakeholders use universal restorative techniques in many restorative environments. These techniques are on a continuum from proactive to reactive and include affective statements, restorative questions, proactive circles, responsive circles, and restorative meetings/conferences. This JEPD offered first responders guidance on the use of many practices and on when to apply each one, based on the specific situation they encounter with students.

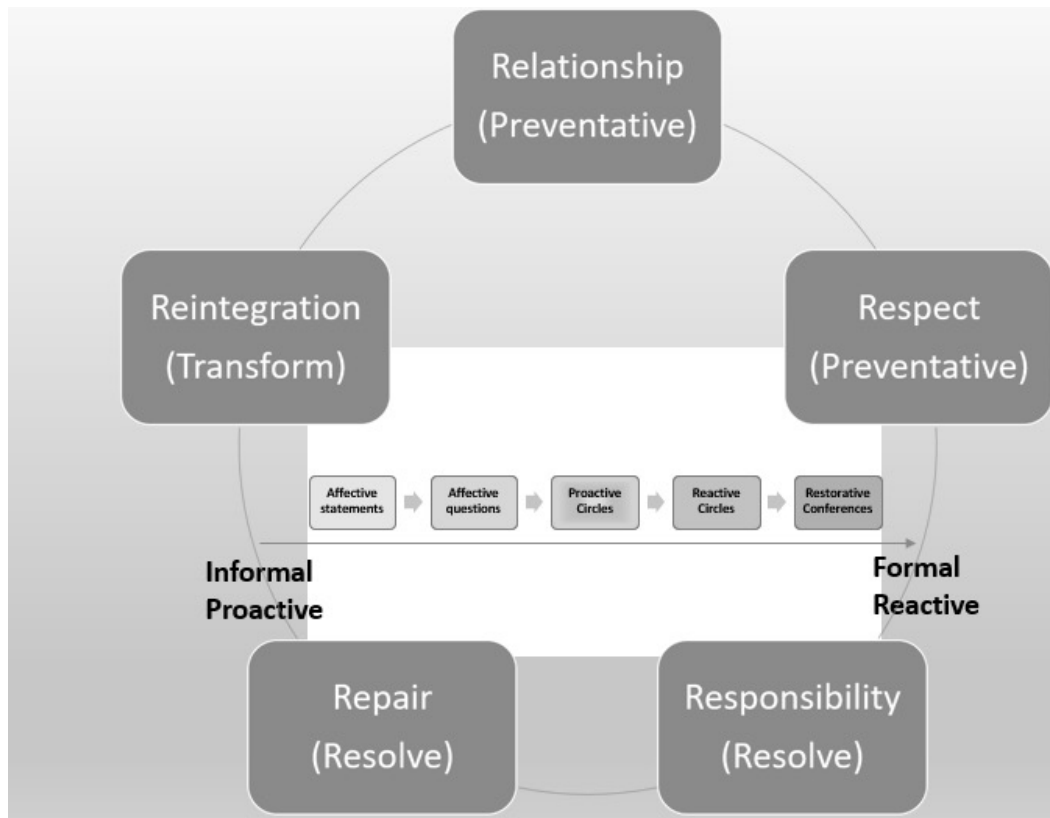
Title (2009) created a framework with five basic values of restorative practices called the 5 R's: relationship, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration. These 5 R's were written as an easily remembered guide, created for staff and volunteers (Title, 2009, p. 14). Title's 5 R's were the basis for the training, reflection, and evaluation related to the use of restorative practices in this exploratory action research study. The 5 R's provided a guide for protocol design, for the development of the training for first responders, for the basis of reflection and discussion during professional development, and for data analysis.

Although intertwined, the 5 R's each have their own importance in restorative practices. Title (2011) stated, "Relationships are the primary focus of restorative practices" (2011, p. 40). Evans (2014) agreed, "Restorative justice in education is first and foremost about building relationships that are healthy" (p. 12). Respect directly connects with relationships as "it is what keeps all of the relationships safe and allows us to do conflict constructively" (Title, 2011, p. 62). Respect is the foundation for all restorative practices, as it keeps the process safe. Respect and responsibility also are the "keys to crisis prevention" (Title, 2011, p. 144)

Responsibility, relationships, and respect link because a community of respect and positive relationships must be present for a person to feel safe enough to take responsibility in any wrongdoing (Title, 2011, p. 96). Restorative practices "rest on the primary person who has caused harm being responsible, choosing to be accountable for his or her behavior and admitting any wrong that was done" (Title, 2011, p. 95). Responsibility, the third R, is very important in the process as well. When harm is done, it is important that all participants take responsibility for whatever part they had in the harm (Title, 2011, p. 95). Repair, the fourth R, happens only after people have taken responsibility for harmful actions and have made restitution or repair to the victim, community, themselves, family, and so on (Title, 2011, p. 124). In restorative practices,

the person who caused the harm and others involved all have a part in deciding how the harm can be repaired. After repair is done, the fifth R, reintegration, occurs. Reintegration has been successful when “all parties are right with each other and with the community” (Title, 2011, p. 149). Reintegration is the final step and helps ensure that the first R, relationships, are restored (Title, 2011, p. 149).

In a blog post, Title (2018) further explained each of the R’s by describing the role each plays to transform conflict. Relationship and respect help prevent conflict, responsibility and repair help resolve conflict, and reintegration helps transform conflict. All five R’s work together to create a restorative environment. I consistently reference Title’s 5 R’s framework and commonly used restorative techniques in this study. A visual representation of restorative practice techniques and Title’s 5 R’s illustrates the relationship between aspects of restorative-practice theory used in this study (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3. Restorative practice framework and practice/techniques continuum.*

*Note.* Developed using *Defining Restorative*, by International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2016, retrieved from [https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/defining-restorative/restorative-conference\\_nov-2016.pdf](https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/defining-restorative/restorative-conference_nov-2016.pdf). *Curriculum and Supporting Documents*, by Restorative Practices: SFUSD Student, Family, and Community Support Department, n.d., retrieved August 4, 2018, from <http://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/index.php#framework>; *ReSolutionaries 5Rs Framework to Prevent, Resolve, Transform Conflict* by B. B. Title, 2018, retrieved from <https://resolutionariesinc.com/resolutionaries-5rs-framework/>.

## **Purpose of the Study**

First responders make daily decisions regarding school discipline that impact the lives of students. Though first responders decide whether students are suspended, restrained or expelled, these critical decision-makers receive little professional development in disciplining students. Nationwide, students are suspended because of inappropriate behavior in school, and a disproportionate number of the students suspended are African American boys, highlighting that a lack of training is influencing the perpetuation of inequity. Suspension leads to missed instructional time and increases the chances of students entering the school-to-prison pipeline.

A highly consistent database suggests that the experience of out-of-school suspension or expulsion in and of itself increases student risk for school disengagement, poor school outcomes, dropout, and involvement with juvenile justice, especially among groups more likely to be disproportionately disciplined. (Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014, p. 558)

The disproportionality of discipline data for African American must be addressed by educators, those educators, first responders, who are in a position to make a difference. Restorative practices are an approach successfully used in schools to address discipline concerns in schools. The primary purpose of this study was to explore first responders' experiences of JEPD in restorative practices and the impact of that experience on the disproportionality of discipline occurring for African American boys.

Data for this action-research approach, using quantitative and qualitative measures, included student discipline referral data, which measures the number of times first responders were expected to make decisions regarding discipline; *support call logs*, which log when first responders are responding proactively or reactively to student situations in the classroom; suspension data; seclusion and restraint data; a review of reflective journals completed by first

responders throughout the JEPD experience; and teacher and first responder survey results. The eight participants in JEPD included administrators/coordinators, guidance counselors, student support/behavioral specialists, and paraprofessionals in an elementary school in a Mid-Atlantic school system. I selected these individuals because they served as first responders at the school of interest.

### **Significance of the Study**

This exploratory action research study focused on first responders—leaders and key decision-makers—regarding punitive and exclusionary methods such as suspension and expulsion. Their decisions impact lives daily; thus, they must be well-trained, have knowledge of appropriate strategies, and the confidence to implement strategies and coach others to work with students appropriately.

This action-research study contributes to understanding the impact of JEPD in restorative practices for first responders in schools. The desired effect of the JEPD was to decrease punitive discipline measures by increasing first responders' knowledge, use, and confidence in the use of restorative practices and increasing their ability to coach others in those practices. Disproportionality of discipline for African American boys is a nationwide problem that needs to be addressed urgently. In this study, I also explored the impact of the JEPD on the disproportionality of punitive discipline for African American students.

This study filled a gap in the existing body of research literature about restorative practices in that this research focused specifically on JEPD in restorative practices for first responders who are the final and critical decision-makers about punitive and exclusionary discipline measures. I created the JEPD to meet the needs of first responders. Prior research focused on whole-school implementation of restorative practices or on classroom teachers.

Providing JEPD for first responders may prove to be a low-cost way to support and guide this important group of decision-makers. Moreover, this study informs school administrative teams about implementation strategies for restorative practices for first responders. This study also presents a model for professional development that uses a job-embedded approach, which entails educator learning directly related to their day-to-day practice (Croft et al., 2010). I created the JEPD using Lewin's (1947) and Fullan's (2006) change theory. This research and evidence-based model can be used by others to create professional-development opportunities. In addition, this study resulted in the development of several tools that others can use. A presurvey, midsurvey, and postsurvey; a JEPD opportunity (course) grounded in change theory and restorative-justice theory; and tools and activities to encourage self-reflection of current practices, course materials, and an implementation guide for ongoing JEPD for first responders. This information could help schools and school systems when conducting a cost-benefit analysis to determine how fiscal resources and time would be devoted to JEPD for first responders.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

***Change as three steps (CATS):*** Unfreeze/change/refreeze is a theory of change by Lewin (1947), who was the seminal researcher in change theory.

***First responders:*** School staff who respond to support calls/discipline situations, process student-discipline referrals, and have input on or decide if students are to be suspended or expelled.

***Job-embedded professional development (JEPD):*** Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) defined JEPD as learning that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers' content-specific instruction. JEPD can take place in real time in the classroom with current students, in the classroom nearly in real time and away from students, or shortly

before or after instruction and away from students (Croft et al., 2010, p. 5). For this study, JEPD refers to the time shortly before or after instruction and away from students, meaning the reflection, coaching, or course is ongoing and the content discussed directly relates to discipline situations for which first responders recently responded or will respond.

***Large Mid-Atlantic school system:*** A pre-K–12 school system with approximately 42,000 students and 5,600 employees. The K–12 district has 66 schools.

***Life Science Crisis Intervention (LSCI):*** LSCI is a training course that provides staff with specific competencies to successfully manage crises for students showing six common patterns of student self-defeating behaviors.

***Student discipline referrals (referenced as office discipline referrals):*** Events in which a staff member observes a student violating a school rule and submits documentation of the event to the administrative leadership, who upon review deliver a consequence to the student (Pas et al., 2011, p. 541).

***Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):*** “A tiered framework of positive behavior systems in a school. Success depends on having clear expectations that are taught, rehearsed, and reinforced consistently across settings” (D. M. Ashley, 2016 p. 15).

***Restorative discipline:*** A relational approach to improving school climate and addressing student behavior that fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment (Armour, 2013).

***Restorative conference:*** A conference that involves meeting formally with the offender and the victim in response to “a serious incident using a scripted approach to facilitate accountability and repair harm” (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016, p. 4).



**Restorative justice:** Another commonly used term for restorative practices. Many educators perceived the term restorative justice negatively, as overemphasizing “offenders” and post incident redress in education (Barnes, 2015, p. 24). I use the term restorative practices in this study.

**Restorative language:** This type of language “promotes effective listening skills, open-ended questions, and empathy, uses nonjudgmental words, and incorporates some or all of the questions below into daily interactions” (Barnes, 2015, p. 26).

**Restorative practices:** “Approach(es) that keeps young people in school, address the root causes of the behavior issues, and repair relationships between students” (Fronius et.al, 2016, p.2). Also, actions, words, and thinking that lead to a change in culture in a school and, “as much as an Ethos as it is a set of tools in our tool belt” (Evans, 2014, para. 10)

**Restraint:** “Physical restraint refers to restricting the student’s ability to freely move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head. Mechanical restraint refers to the use of any device or equipment to restrict a student’s freedom of movement” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 11).

**Retributive discipline:** Punitive responses to misbehavior in schools. Accountability stems from serving a punishment or receiving a consequence (Hopkins, 2002, p. 145).

**Seclusion:** “Refers to involuntarily confining a student alone in a room or area from which he or she cannot physically leave” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 11).

**Support calls:** Requests/calls teachers/staff make when they assess that student misconduct necessitates support from assigned staff. A first responder responds when a support call is made and helps intervene with students exhibiting inappropriate behaviors. The teacher/staff member often documents these formally or informally. Formal documentation is

called an office discipline referral. First responders determine if a support call warrants a consequence, depending on the severity of the discipline situation.

***Zero tolerance:*** The enforcement of strict consequences for all when an infraction occurs, regardless of the context of the situation. Consequences are punitive and punishment is used as a deterrent. This policy often leads to harsh consequences, such as suspension/expulsion (Gonzalez, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

Guiding this exploratory action research study are the following research questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways does JEPD in restorative practices impact first responders?
  - a. How does JEPD in restorative practices affect first responders?:
    - i. knowledge of restorative practices?
    - ii. use of restorative practices?
    - iii. perceived effectiveness of the use of restorative practices?
    - iv. perceptions of their abilities to teach/coach others about restorative practices?
    - v. effectiveness of addressing student discipline referrals according to teacher perceptions?
    - vi. responses to discipline calls with African American males?
  - b. What is the impact of the premises of change theory driving Job-Embedded Professional Development on first responders?

## **Overview of the Methodology**

This action-research study focused on elementary school first responders who participated in a three-credit course focused on restorative practices. The course was delivered in a JEPD format. The JEPD course in this study took place shortly before or after instruction and away from students. The course had three delivery types: face-to-face, online, and a combination of face-to-face and online.

The face-to-face and online sessions took place shortly after interaction with students, were ongoing, and directly related to the daily work of first responders. In each face-to-face session, first responders analyzed support-call logs and referral data, set goals, and reflected on their current practices. Participants also received JEPD nearly in real time and away from students by receiving informal feedback following researcher observation of responses to support calls.

Participants in the JEPD were therapists, student support/behavioral specialists, guidance counselors, administrators, and program coordinators in a mid-sized elementary school in a large Mid-Atlantic school system. In the general education setting was a specialized special-education program. Participants were from the general education and the specialized special-education program housed in the school. Data from this study focused solely on a single school within the school system.

Fullan's (2006) and Lewin's (1947) change theory guided the development of the course syllabus. Participants engaged in reflection on their use of restorative practices with other first responders. Restorative practices involve a continuum of responses, shown in Appendix A, ranging from proactive to reactive. These practices include affective statements, restorative questions, proactive circles, responsive circles, and restorative meetings/conferences. The

professional development offered first responders guidance on the use of all practices and their timely use, based on specific situations with the students they encountered.

The professional development was about once a month from December to June so participants could receive direct instruction, coaching, and ongoing peer and supervisor support throughout the change process. At the start of each session, participants shared their successes and struggles during the month using restorative practices. Participants were encouraged to be flexible but persistent in their change of practice. This exploratory action-research study included multiple methods of data collection: surveys, journaling, referrals, seclusion, and restraint and support log data. Refer to Table 3 for the connection between the methods of data collection and the research questions.

Table 3

*Research Question and Data-Collection Method*

Research questions	Type of data	Data source
<b>To what extent and in what ways does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices impact first responders?</b>		
<i>How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders'?</i>		
a. knowledge of restorative practices?	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
	Qualitative	Reflective Journals/ Class Evaluation Forms Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey— open responses
b. use of restorative practices?	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
	Qualitative	Observation Reflections Reflective Journals Scenarios
c. perceived effectiveness of the use of restorative practices?	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
d. perceptions of their abilities to teach/coach others about restorative practices?	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
e. effectiveness of addressing student discipline referrals according to teacher perceptions?	Quantitative	Teacher's Survey
	Qualitative	Teacher Survey-Open Responses Researcher Journal
f. responses to discipline calls for African American males?	Quantitative	Support call log SWIS
<i>What is the impact of the premises of change theory driving Job-Embedded Professional Development on first responders?</i>		
	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
	Qualitative	Observation Reflections Reflective Journals Course Feedback Forms

### **Bounds of the Study**

All studies have boundaries guiding what gets included and excluded from the research. This study has several bounds. First, participants were all first responders, self-selected to participate in this research study. Participants, all of whom were invited to participate, were motivated to learn about the use of restorative practices in their schools. Thus, individuals' ability to decide whether to participate reduced the randomness of the sample population. Moreover, as one of the supervisors of first responders in this study, my position may have had a coercive effect in influencing staff members to participate in the study and the course. Sample size comprised eight participants from one school. Although not the intention of this exploratory action research, the validity, utility, and generalizability of the study results and findings is limited by the small sample size. The time for the study was limited because the professional development took place in less than one full school year. Having a shorter time frame for the collection of data may have limited the time for the professional development to produce noticeable/ desired effects.

As a member of the school district of the study, as one of the supervisors of the first responders at the school, and as the instructor of the professional-development sessions, I am a major stakeholder. I have read multiple studies and research articles. I also have a strong opinion about the importance of the implementation of restorative practices and am a quite passionate, fervent advocate for its use in schools. My researcher positionality biased me during the study, which I explore in more depth and specifics in Chapter 3.

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation began with an explanation for the implementation of restorative practices in a large Mid-Atlantic school system and the purpose of the study. In Chapter 2, the literature review describes the evolution of restorative practices in education. The chapter also provides background information about restorative practices and a review of professional development and its effectiveness. Thereafter, Chapter 3 includes a thorough overview of the methodology used for this study. Chapter 4 presents the results of this exploratory action-research study, aligned with research sub questions. Quantitative and qualitative data are interwoven under each question to present the findings and analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the key findings, significance of the study based on the findings, implications, and suggestions for future research. The implications section includes suggestions for implementation and an adjusted concept map, based on the study findings.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this exploratory action-research study was to explore the impact of JEPD in restorative practices for first responders and the impact of the JEPD on disproportionate African American disciplinary data. The first section of this literature review provides a historical and informational overview of restorative justice/practices. The second section discusses how and why restorative justice/practices evolved in the educational system. The third section provides a definition of restorative practices and information on how it is implemented in schools. The fourth section provides information on the implementation of restorative practices in schools at the time of the study. The fifth section defines JEPD and provides research and information about why it is used. The last section provides information about reflective practitioners and the importance of reflection for educators. The information in this section presents the research used to design this study. The last page of this chapter describes the conceptual framework used to guide this study.

### **Development of Restorative Practices**

The origin of restorative practices was in the premodern native cultures of the South Pacific and Americas. These cultures emphasized a focus on the harm done to others, ensuring the offender was accountable, that a plan for repairing was present, and that the offender was accepted back into the community once the harm had been repaired (Fronius et al., 2016). These early tenets continue to be the guiding principles of restorative practices used in schools today.

Three goals align with restorative practices. The first goal is *accountability*. It is imperative that offenders take responsibility for the harm they have done. Restorative practices provide opportunities for offenders to repair the harm they caused. The second goal is *community safety*. Safety of the community is crucial, accomplished by empowering stakeholders and



through building relationships. The third goal is *competency development*. Restorative practices reinforce prosocial skills that help address factors leading to delinquent behavior. It is important to ensure that the people who have “harmed others increase social skills and that the motivation factors that impact students is addressed. (J. Ashley & Burke, 2009, p. 6)

In the United States, criminal-justice professionals were the first to use restorative practices. Professor of Sociology and Restorative Justice Howard Zehr is a seminal researcher on restorative practices. As Zehr (1996) defined, “Restorative practices view crime as harm done to people and communities. ... Restorative practices begin with the concern for victims and how to meet their needs, for repairing harm as much as possible, both concretely and symbolically” (p. 1). His philosophy is quite different from traditional legal processes. According to Zehr, “Little in the [traditional] justice process encourages offenders to understand the consequences of their actions or to empathize with victims” (p. 1).

In the early 2000s, restorative practices became influential in the legal system in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada (Varnham, 2005, p. 93). In New Zealand, restorative practices guide and help shape the family-group conference approach that is now the basis of that country’s entire juvenile-justice system (Zehr, 1996, p. 4). Braithwaite (2002), an early advocate of the use of restorative practices, found restorative practices could reduce violence and bullying and restore and satisfy victims, offenders, and the community better than existing practices.

Braithwaite’s (2002) reintegrative-shaming theory is a “well-known framework for understanding restorative practices in criminology” (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 5). According to reintegrative-shaming theory, creating shame for the offender is impactful. Reintegrative-shaming theory “provided the first coherent theoretical attempt to link restorative practices and

retributive traditions” (Benade, 2015, p. 662). However, Braithwaite’s theory is not universally accepted in the restorative-practice community (Benade, 2015). Many theorists instead believe that ensuring the offender achieves empathy is much more effective than shaming offenders.

### **Evolution of Restorative Practices in Education**

Prior to the baby boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1964), corporal punishment was commonly used to deter students from misbehaving (Adams, 2000). From the 1950s to the 1970s—a period that included the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War protests, and student unrest—corporal punishment lost its effectiveness in highly populated and hierarchical schools, as students were more rebellious and these measures no longer seemed to deter would-be offenders (Adams, 2000).

In the search to find something more effective, new discipline approaches replaced corporal punishment. Adams (2000) stated, “The use of student exclusion, through suspension and expulsion, as a response to violence in schools grew in use during the 1960’s and 1970’s” (p. 10) and administrators viewed suspensions as an efficient way to handle many students who misbehaved. Administrators believed suspensions would provide protection for the larger student body and that the tactic afforded a sense of control over much larger educational facilities that were emerging (Adams, 2000). However, the way schools responded to discipline issues may contribute to the number of expulsions and suspensions. Penny (2015) offered this explanation:

School administrators professionalize and problematize behavior problems through hierarchical interference by encouraging or requiring teachers to send students who are creating problems or being disrespectful to an administrator and by making more serious problems out of issues that can be handled in the classroom. By allowing teachers and students to handle nonviolent problems in the classroom, the students build skills in

conflict resolution and participate in creating a more sustainable democratic society.

(p. 16)

Restorative practices offer teachers tools to handle concerns in their classrooms. Student-discipline referrals may not be truly objective indicators of student-behavior problems; rather, they may indicate teachers' use of student removal from the classroom as a disciplinary strategy.

Regardless of the validity of [Office discipline referrals], they are a significant concern because they are indicators of missed class time for the student (estimated to be between 20 and 40 minutes; Scott & Barrett, 2004), which in itself may portend poor educational outcomes for the student. (Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 517)

Three themes have dominated the discussion in education: safety and student behavior, the large number of suspensions/expulsions, and most recently, the debate over how best to educate our children in a democratic society (Varnham, 2005). Penny (2015) shared the following:

The goal of restorative practices in schools, it seems, is not just to resolve an instant conflict, but, rather, to give students the tools that they need to have long-term success. When students are taught meaningful tools such as building meaningful relationships, they often succeed in the long term in resolving their conflict rather than having to be walked through the process by a teacher at every turn. (p. 7)

Critics have argued that the traditional approach manages student behavior rather than develops students' capacity and facilitates their growth. These critics contended that the approach establishes a power dynamic between teachers and students (and, at times, among students) that is detrimental to students' articulation of views and feeling of empowerment (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 6).

Schools around the world have implemented restorative practices for more than 20 years. Thorsborne was the first to use a restorative conference in an Australian school in 1994 (Cameron and Thorsborne, 1994, p. 2). Following that first successful conference in Queensland, Australia, “restorative ... practices in schools were adopted widely across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and other European nations, and then eventually in Canada and the United States” (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 13). Restorative practices are being implemented in schools and districts across many states, to varying degrees. In some states, such as California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania, restorative practices have been comprehensively implemented for many years (Fronius et al., 2016).

As Fronius et al. asserted, “Despite the growing popularity of restorative practices, rigorous empirical tests of whether restorative practices make an impact on discipline, climate and related outcomes have not yet been completed” (2016, p. 19). Moreover,

Though the research on restorative practices is still in the infancy stage, several exploratory studies have indicated promising results of restorative ... approaches in terms of their impact on school climate, student behavior and relationships between students and with staff. (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 2)

Researchers are conducting several studies. One is a 5-year clustered, randomized controlled trial conducted in Maine across 14 middle schools (Song & Swearer, 2016).

Restorative [practices are] not another program to be imposed on schools. It is a philosophy, a way of being and relating. It does not replace current initiatives. Promising and evidence-based programs such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) ... and other initiatives assist in building a foundation and culture of caring. (Kidde & Alfred, 2011, p. 9)

Restorative practices are a component of school culture that can work in conjunction with other socioemotional and behavioral programs.

A large body of empirical research indicated that restorative practices are effective in sectors such as juvenile-justice systems, but comparable research regarding its effectiveness in improving school safety is relatively new especially in the United States. The results of studies in several U.S. schools showed favorable results when implementing restorative practices. For instance, in a study that involved Oakland, California, public schools, the impact of participation in schoolwide restorative practice was fewer suspensions, and this impact was greater for African American students compared to other student groups. A decrease also emerged in student-discipline referrals for disruptive behaviors in class and improved academic outcomes (Cohen et al., 2014).

One example of a study overseas is the Kane et al. (2007) final report on a 2-year pilot-research project that focused on the development of restorative practices in Scotland's schools. This study provided descriptions of types of restorative practices implemented in schools. Notably, the researchers detailed less formal restorative practices including school staff and students' use of restorative language and mediation. This pilot study yielded positive results in reducing suspensions/expulsions in schools in Scotland. (Kane, Lloyd, McCluskey, Riddell, Stead, Weedon, 2007)

Recently, stakeholders increased interest in restorative practices. Several states support these efforts, passing legislative changes on school discipline. Some states with these laws include California, Oregon, Georgia, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Maryland (Skiba & Losen, 2016). The School Discipline Policy & School Climate Bill of Rights required Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest school district in the United States, to implement

restorative programs in all of their district schools by 2020. In 2012, the Massachusetts legislature passed a law requiring alternatives to expulsion, such as restorative practices, which led to Fall River, Massachusetts School District developing a code of conduct that included restorative practices in 2014.

Beyond state-level legislation, attention to restorative practices is growing nationally. At least three federal agencies provided funding to study school-based restorative justice and this practice has received endorsement from many politicians including former President Obama. (Gonzalez, 2016).

The continued growth in practices coupled with its institutionalization at local state and federal levels signals that restorative justice is no longer viewed as an alternative program at the margins of school discipline. Rather it is at the center of critical educational and legal policy reform. (Gonzalez, 2016 p. 144)

### **What Are Restorative Practices?**

Restorative practices are actions, words, and thoughts that lead to a change in culture. As Evans (2014) stated, “Restorative [practices are] as much an ethos as it is a set of tools in our tool belt” (2014. para 10). Restorative practices are not a program. As Kidde and Alfred (2011) explained, “When schools implement restorative practices as a program rather than a philosophy and paradigm shift, attention is focused on intensive intervention and neglects the paradigm shift in culture and prevention” (p. 10) and “when this happens, resources and efforts are all expended on only that portion of the school population that is in crisis” (p. 12). Restorative practices can be implemented in conjunction with other evidence-based programs already established in schools. Staff need to learn and effectively implement several preventative and reactive restorative elements to create a restorative school environment. An ethos of care and social and emotional

learning are part of a restorative environment (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Restorative practices require ongoing training and reflections of all members of a school community. “Restorative practices are about building bonds rather than issuing punishments/consequences; they serve the goals of education by ensuring that young people are given a chance to grow through their mistakes in some unique ways” (Penny, 2015, p. 2).

Theorists have commonly prescribed certain principles of restorative practices. For instance, McCluskey et al., (2008) emphasized the following tenets should be in place for effective implementation of restorative practices:

- Willingness of staff to reflect on interactions and review values
  - Dedication to addressing behavior through restorative practices involving active learning for staff and children
  - Visible commitment, enthusiasm, and modeling by the school-management team
  - Significant staff development in restorative practices
  - Emphasis on ethos and relationships in and out of the classroom
  - Responsibility and accountability taken for one’s actions and impact on others
- (McCluskey et al., 2008).

In contrast to restorative measures, punitive measures include consequences such as corporal punishment, suspension, detention, and expulsion. Three of the most popular means of discipline in a restorative approach are mediation, restitution, and community service (Payne & Welch, 2015). These contrast with punitive measures, such as suspensions and expulsions, that have long been staples of schools. The types of discipline, when using restorative practices, often directly relate to the offense, and all parties participating in the restorative process agree on the discipline chosen.

A restorative approach focuses on the following:

- problem-solving rather than determining guilt or blame;
- relationships and achievement rather than a focus on rules and adherence;
- empowerment of the offender rather than the victim being powerless or uninvolved in the justice process. (Cohan et.al 2014)

When applied to the school context, restorative practices shift the emphasis from antisocial behavior, challenging the authority of the school, to seeing such behavior as damaging to relationships in the school. The effect is that restorative practices allow a way forward for the individuals concerned because, rather than having to submit to authority, they are required to take responsibility for repairing the damage to those they have hurt and to the school community as a whole (Varnham, 2005, p. 95).

Implementation of restorative practices requires a change in culture and attitudes of staff. As Varnham (2005) stated, “A change in culture may be achieved only gradually. It requires policy development ... followed by training ... of existing staff to widen the view from teaching to practicing democratic processes” (p. 99). For the culture to change, schools must move away from rigid rules and toward the school community working together, shift from the school staff being viewed as authority figures to the staff being viewed as members of the community, focus on repairing relationships, and concentrate on relationships in the community (Varnham, 2005).

Restorative practices focus on the offender as well as the victim. In punitive or retributive practices, the offender may receive a consequence without involvement of the victim. According to Penny (2015), “As Zehr and Meka (2003) note in their literature, perhaps schools should make this choice [of using restorative practices] thinking more about the victim than about the offender” (p. 6). Facilitators often use intervention processes such as restorative questions and



responsive questions after an incident has occurred. The goal of these processes is to repair the harm done and to restore a sense of community.

Specific protocols and training have been created to assist educators with these intervention processes. “Although numerous PD and other training on RJ can be found through a Google search, scholarship providing empirical evidence or even conceptual guidance for PD in RJ is rare in peer-reviewed journals” 9 (Mayworm, Sharkey, Hunnicutt, & Schiedel, 2016). Restorative practices are comprehensive and require planning and training so they are implemented effectively. Many schools continue to implement punitive measures to address student discipline. The implementation of restorative practices requires a shift in the thinking and behaviors of a school community.

### **Restorative Practices Implemented in Schools**

Restorative practices can be solely implemented or can be added to the school’s current processes to respond to incidents of misbehavior. Restorative practices can be used along with current initiatives and other evidence-based programs such as PBIS and Second Step that build culture for students. Programs such as these can complement restorative practices (Kidde & Alfred, 2011).

Restorative practices include strategies to prevent rule infractions before they occur and to intervene when an infraction has occurred (Gregory et al., 2016, p. 4). No program or format is universally adopted. Restorative practices, shown in Figure 2, are either preventative or reactive/intervention. Preventative restorative practices aid in the development of relationships and a sense of community. Reactive restorative practices are used after an incident has occurred; educators use such practices to repair the harm done and to restore a sense of community (Gregory et al., 2016).

Many case studies and reports of restorative practices show they positively impact student behavior and the school climate (J. Ashley & Burke, 2009, p. 8). Thorsborne, first to implement a restorative practice called conferencing into schools in Australia in 1994, coauthored with Blood,

Several studies (Queensland Education Dept, 1996), New South Wales (McKenzie, 1999: in Strang, 2001) and Victoria (Shaw & Wierenga, 2002) (that) have demonstrated that conferencing is a highly effective process for responding to inappropriate behavior of a serious nature in schools. (2005, p. 2) These studies have shown positive effects from the use of restorative practices. Findings by the Queensland Education Department in 1996 included that participants were highly satisfied with the process and its outcomes, experienced low rates of reoffending, had closer relationships with conference participants after conferencing, and nearly all schools changed their thinking about managing behavior from a punitive to a more restorative approach.

Fronius et al. (2016) in a literature review found that “rigorous empirical tests of whether [restorative justice] makes an impact on discipline, climate, and related outcomes have not yet been completed. Many of the studies located are descriptive or use a pre-post (‘before and after’) evaluation design” (p. 19). Although much research needs to be done, restorative justice appears to have helped a significant number of schools in two large public-school districts tackle large problems with high overall suspension levels and large African American disproportionality in school suspensions (Simson, 2012, p. 36).

Few current research studies focused on the impact of restorative practices on disproportionate data (Song & Swearer, 2016), rendering this an area to be explored. A study in 2012 found that two schools experienced a decrease in the disproportionality of discipline for

African American students, and that schools that implemented restorative practices decreased the number of African American suspensions by a greater amount than no restorative-practice schools (Simson, 2012). Another study by Gregory et al. found that “Higher RP implementation was associated with lower use of disruption/defiance disciplinary referrals with Latino and African American students” (2016, p. 24).

### **Job-Embedded Professional Development**

Appropriate training on any topic is essential to achieve results, and training in discipline methods, or in the case of this study, restorative practices, is no exception. To increase the quality of educators, considerable resources are allocated to training or as referenced in education, *professional development*. It is estimated that school districts spend an average of \$18,000 per teacher per year on teacher training (Jacob & McGovern, 2015 p. 3). Given this high allocation of funds, it is important that educators capitalize on the time spent in professional development and maximize the valuable time and resources devoted to this important endeavor. Professional development should ultimately benefit its most precious stakeholders: children.

“Well-designed and implemented professional development should be considered an essential component of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning...” (Darling-Hammond, Hyster, Garnder, 2017 p. 24). Professional development can be delivered in a variety of ways to ensure educators have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach students. Although professional development is a consistent part of most educators’ careers, participants do not always view it as helpful. Additionally, only a limited number of studies have found/discovered a direct correlation between professional development and raising student achievement. As Croft et al. (2010) explained, “Much of the research on professional development is descriptive, without causal investigation” (p. 8).

Darling-Hammond et al. wrote, “over 90 percent of teachers report having participated in professional development in the past year, but the majority also report that it wasn’t useful” (p. 9). Therefore, the training has failed to help teachers meaningfully improve, and professional development is not even meeting the much lower bar of giving teachers what they need (Jacob & McGovern, 2015, p. 26). Professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001, p. 9). Training that participants do not view as effective is useless and will likely have little impact on teaching practices.

Darling-Hammond et al.’s (2017) review of research on professional development found that professional development should link to educators’ experiences, teaching standards, and evaluation. If educators believe that professional development is disconnected from what they are required to teach or do with students, and the newly taught information is not supported or reinforced, the professional development is only minimally impactful (Jacob & McGovern, 2015, p. 10).

Providing training that connects to what teachers are doing and providing support to learn new skills is essential. To ensure successful implementation of new skills,

teachers’ success in accomplishing the serious and difficult tasks of *learning* the skills and perspectives assumed by new visions of practice and *unlearning* the practices and beliefs about students and instruction that have dominated their professional lives to date. Yet few occasions and little support for such professional development exist in teachers’ environments. (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011, p. 81).

Teachers’ positive attitudes about situations or tasks can lead to an improvement in performance. Kutlu, Yıldırım, and Bilican (2010), in their study of teachers’ understanding and use of rubrics, discovered an example of this phenomenon: teachers with positive attitudes

toward rubrics used them more often and more effectively than those with negative attitudes toward them. Study results suggested that teachers with a positive perception of professional development may apply newly learned information more effectively.

Would educator effectiveness improve more if they participated in more activities they view as a good use of their time or that focused on their individual development needs? The answer is unclear. However, according to Jacob and McGovern (2015),

it stands to reason that if current improvement efforts are getting such lackluster results, it would make sense for districts to help teachers first clearly understand what it is they need to improve upon and then provide greater access to a variety of activities that, at a minimum, are perceived as more useful, and at best, may actually help them improve.

(p. 3)

Other studies indicated that professional development in a workshop format is ineffective. These study results suggest that the delivery method of professional development can hinder its effectiveness. Just-in-time, job-embedded assistance with follow-up is effective (Guskey & Yoon, 2009) and likely to be viewed positively by first responders. The majority of studies showed positive improvements in achievement when educators received significant amounts of structured and sustained follow-up after the main professional-development activities (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Because of JEPD's promising effectiveness, federal education regulations such as the School Grants and Race to the Top grant applications have referenced it (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). According to Croft et al. (2010), "Job-embedded professional development, skillfully implemented and supported by federal, state and local policy, constitutes a powerful lever to advance student learning" (p. 13). JEPD can take place in real time in the classroom with

current students, in the classroom nearly real-time and away from students, or shortly before or after instruction and away from students (Croft et al., 2010, p. 5). For professional development to be job-embedded, the learning and discussion must be ongoing and directly connected to recent practice.

### **Reflective Practitioners**

Reflection on current practices is necessary for educators to learn and grow. As discussed earlier, Fullan (2006) suggested that “a bias for reflective action” is one of the seven core premises for change to occur. Educators are not always conscious of inappropriate responses to students, based on culture, race, gender, or social class (Larrivee, 2000, p. 297)). As Larrivee (2000) stated, “Unless teachers engage in critical reflection and ongoing discovery, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations” (p. 294). Those unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations are termed *implicit bias*. These beliefs and judgments can be conveyed through educators’ actions with students.

Research on implicit bias has identified several conditions in which individuals are most likely to rely on their unconscious associations. These include situations that involve ambiguous or incomplete information; the presence of time constraints; and circumstances in which one’s cognitive control may be compromised, such as ambiguity, fatigue, or having a great deal on one’s mind (Bertrand, Chugh, & Mullainathan, 2005, p. 94; Staats, 2015, p. 30).

*Critical reflection* combines critical inquiry and self-reflection and “involves examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practices” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 294). Dewey (1933) a seminal researcher, described examination of personal and professional beliefs as a process. Dewey defined reflection as, “Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed

form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends (p. 12). Dewey's work "indicates some of the basic characteristics that underpin almost all models and theories of reflection by stressing the active, conscious, deliberate thinking" (Sellars, 2017, p. 4) necessary for reflection to happen.

Schon (1983) focused on educators and discussed "reflection-in-action," which refers to reflection while handling a situation or after a situation or experience occurs. "In this respect, Schon is acknowledging the experiences of the teacher as a source of knowledge that is valuable in reflective practice" (as cited in Sellars, 2017, p. 5). Reflective journals can help teachers "look more objectively at their behaviors in the classroom. ... Journal writing is also a helpful tool for examining personal biases and prejudices that may unwittingly play out in interactions with students" (Larrivee, 2000, p. 298). When responding to discipline calls and student discipline referrals, first responders may experience implicit bias, mitigated when staff is aware that it may impact their responses. Developing the practice of self-reflection helps educators learn to slow their thinking and reasoning process to become more aware of how they perceive and react to students and to bring to the surface some unconscious ways of responding to students (Larrivee, 2000, p. 298).

When teachers become reflective practitioners, they move beyond a knowledge base of discrete skills to a stage where they integrate and modify skills to fit specific contexts, and, eventually, to a point where the skills are internalized, enabling them to invent new strategies. They develop the necessary sense of self-efficacy to create personal solutions to problems. (Larrivee, 2000, p. 294)

Staff members who respond to support calls experience various situations that occur through the course of a school year. Learning new strategies to address the many needs of

students is essential. Giving first responders time to reflect on their current practices so they have internalized them and have confidence to use them and coach others, was an essential part of the course developed for this study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was based on the conceptual framework, shown in Figure 3, consolidates all topics researched in the literature review in a visual model: reflective-justice theory, JEPD, change theory, and reflective practitioners. The conceptual framework is laid out in a linear pattern from left to right, and explains why the study is important, provides an action plan to address the problem, and the intended results after the action plan has been implemented.

I believe that disproportionality for African American boys exists because nonreflective, untrained first responders use punitive methods of discipline, lack confidence and knowledge, do not use restorative practices, lack data-based decision-making regarding discipline, take part in little or no training, and do not coach other discipline decision-makers in the school. Those trained in restorative practices must coach other teachers and instructional assistants who do not use discipline data or restorative practices to address discipline concerns. My theory is that if schools can provide untrained first responders with JEPD grounded in change theory (Fullan, 2006; Lewin 1947) and restorative practices (Title, 2009), first responders would be confident, reflective, data-driven coaches of restorative practices. In turn, these first responders would make decisions that would lead to equitable discipline of African American male students.

Through the JEPD, data reflection and newly presented information were presented, causing first responders to recognize the need for change (unfreeze) and implement, evaluate, or benchmark, and be a role model (change) aligned with change theory (see Figure 4).



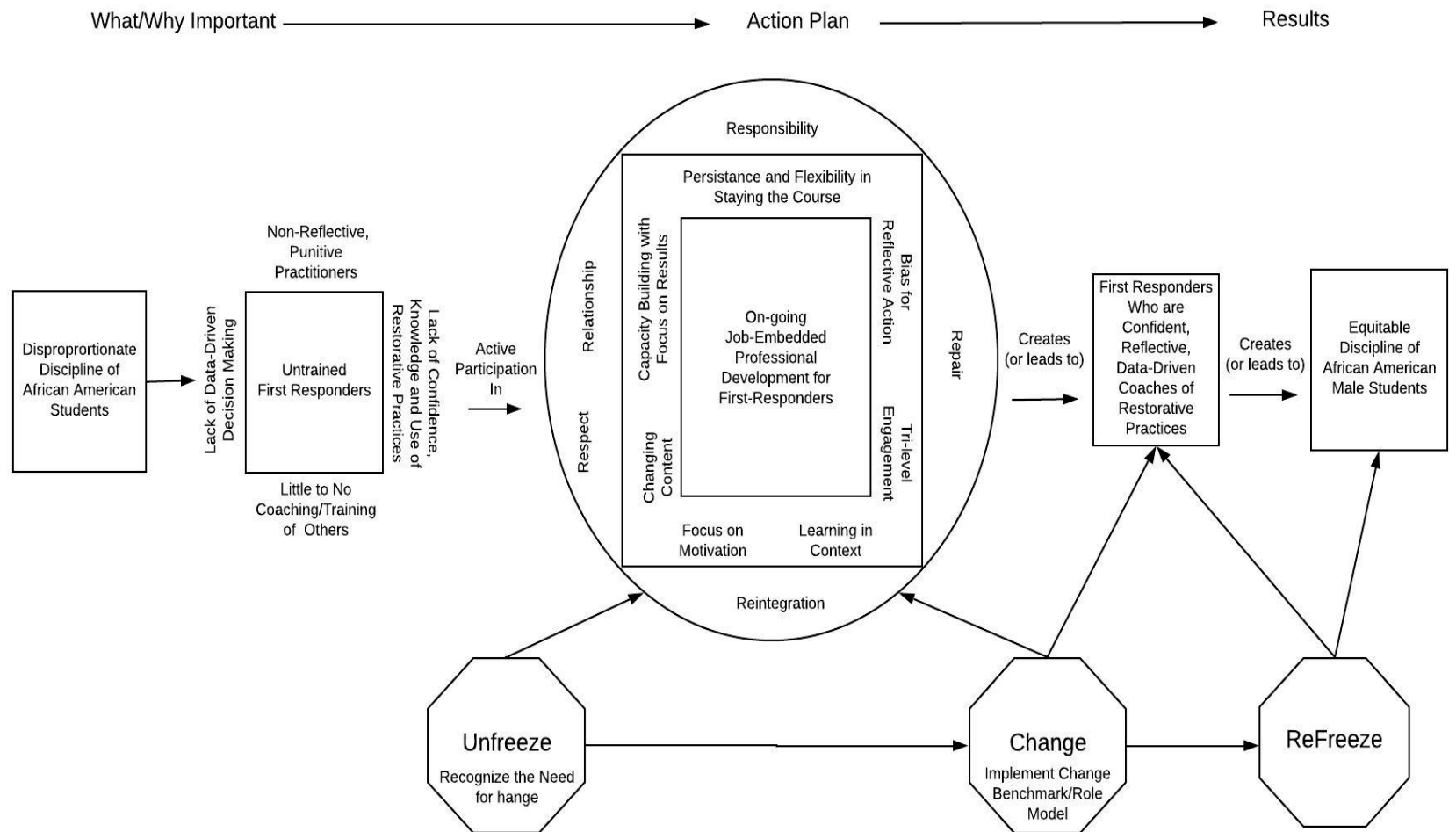


Figure 4. Coley's conceptual framework.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reports that African American boys are being suspended and expelled at disturbingly inequitable rates. First responders decide the consequences students receive for wrongdoing in school. Some schools use restorative practices to address discipline concerns. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent and in what ways the JEPD I developed for first responders impacted their use of restorative practices and, in turn, what impact that training has on our disproportionate discipline data for African American boys.

To address this primary focus, I sought several data sources: referral data; support call logs; informal feedback forms; suspension, seclusion, and restraint data; a review of reflective journals and a scenario; and survey results. First responders' JEPD experiences informed this action-research study. Participants included school-based administrators, the special-program coordinator, guidance counselor, student support/behavioral specialists, and school-based therapists in an elementary school in a Mid-Atlantic school system, selected because they all served as first responders for support/discipline calls. In this chapter, I explain the action research design, participants, procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis.

### **Research Design**

#### **Action Research**

Action research amalgamates theory and action when people collaborate to address key problems in their organizations (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). A primary purpose of action research is to "produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. A wider purpose of action research is to contribute through this practical knowledge

to the increased well-being” (p. 4). Furthermore, practical knowledge contributes to increased well-being (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Smith (2015), the developer of exploratory *action research*, described integrating research into practice. Action research emerged for teachers to research topics related to occurrences in classrooms. Action research works to resolve emerging issues by implementing and evaluating new actions. It is a “gradualistic approach,” developed to be useful and clarify an existing situation for educators (Smith, 2015). The process allows movement from an exploratory time to reflect, plan, observe, and reflect again, and then use that reflection to further explore the topic and take action (Smith, 2015).

Only after a first exploratory research phase has been completed are (educators) guided to consider trying to resolve emerging issues by implementing and evaluating new actions, which themselves are grounded in and justified by findings from the first, exploratory phase. (Smith, 2015, p. 39)

Herr and Anderson’s (2014) explanation of the benefits of action research clearly articulated why I preferred this method. Action research is value laden, meaning it allowed me to address a concern in a school where I was a supervisor, thereby allowing me to make a difference in my own setting. Action research is a reflective process that allowed me to understand issues at the school and address them, yielding results that will be transferable to other schools (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Exploratory action research allowed me to begin to address a need at the school while gathering data and information that could be useful to other schools and school districts.

## **Exploratory Action Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

For this exploratory action-research study, I used quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose was to determine to what extent and in what ways JEPD for first responders impacted the use of restorative practices and assess how JEPD in restorative practices impacted discipline data, specifically for African American male students. I collected several types of qualitative data. For example, participants kept a reflective journal throughout the class. As part of this journal, participants explained how they would address a scenario before the course began and then explained how they would address the same scenario after the professional-development sessions. As the primary researcher, I journaled and recorded my thoughts during and after each course session.

I also collected quantitative data, administering a presurvey, midsurvey, and postsurvey to all participants. Each of these surveys had some of the same questions. I collected and analyzed the rate and number of student-discipline referrals: the number and rate of restraints and seclusions, and support call log data, which included calls that did not require student-discipline referrals. Table 4 shows the instrumentation, the source of the instrumentation, and the method of analysis used in this study. Table 5 shows each research question, the type of data collected (qualitative or quantitative), and the data-collection method. All data-collection methods were aligned with the research questions shown.

## **Setting, Environment, Participants, and Course Information**

### **Setting**

This study took place in a Pre-K–fifth-grade elementary school that is part of a large Mid-Atlantic school system. The school selected was a part of an elementary, middle, and high

school cluster. The first responders in the JEPD sessions were staff in the feeder schools who agreed to implement restorative practices schoolwide. This network is called the feeder pattern.

Table 4

*Data Measures and Instrumentation Used*

Data measures	Instrument/data-collection method	Source
Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey	SurveyMonkey Descriptive Statistics Measures of Frequency- Count/ Percentage Measures of Central Tendency Mean/ Mode Measures of variability Standard Deviation  Open Responses Coded in NVivo	Titles (2011) 5 R's; Thorsborne and Associates Seven Key Questions (2014); Zehr (2015)
Reflective Journals	SurveyMonkey Coded in NVivo	prompts connected to research questions
Peer Observation Reflections	SurveyMonkey Coded in NVivo	Informal feedback form created based on Zehr's (2015) degrees of restorative justice continuum and seven key questions (p. 70) and Thorsborne and Associates' (2014) "How Restorative Am I?" questions and 5 R's Title (2011)
Class Feedback Forms/Journal	SurveyMonkey Coded in NVivo	Researcher developed questions
Scenarios (Pre-/ Post)	SurveyMonkey Coded using a rating scale of 1 (not evident)–4 completely evident)	Researcher developed scenarios based on past discipline experience
Teacher Survey	SurveyMonkey Descriptive Statistics Measures of Frequency- Count/ Percentage Measures of Central Tendency Mean/ Mode Measures of variability Standard Deviation  Open Responses coded in NVivo	Questions based on SALG format/Title's (2011) 5 R's; Thorsborne, 2014; Zehr (2015)

Table 5

*Data-Collection Method*

Research questions	Type of data	Data source
To what extent and in what ways does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices impact first responders?		
How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders':		
	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
a. knowledge of restorative practices?	Qualitative	Reflective Journals/ Class Evaluation Forms Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey open responses
	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
b. use of restorative practices?	Qualitative	Observation Reflections Reflective Journals Scenarios
c. perceived effectiveness of the use of restorative practices?	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
d. perceptions of their abilities to teach/coach others about restorative practices?	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
	Quantitative	Teacher's Survey
e. effectiveness of addressing student discipline referrals according to teacher perceptions?	Qualitative	Teacher Survey-Open Responses Researcher Journal
	Quantitative	Support call log School-Wide Intervention System (SWIS)
f. responses to discipline calls for African American males?		
	Quantitative	Pre-/Mid-/Post Survey
What is the impact of the premises of change theory driving Job-Embedded Professional Development	Qualitative	Observation Reflections Reflective Journals Course Feedback Forms

According to the school's website, the official enrollment for the 2017–2018 school year was 498 students. The school system classified students as shown in Table 6: the total population of students was 17% special-education students, and 6% were classified as English-language

learners, meaning that English is not the first language of these children. The percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunches was 39%.

Table 6

*Official School Enrollment*

Race/ethnicity ( <i>n</i> = 498)	Percentage of each race/ethnicity
White/Caucasian	54
Black/African American	17
Hispanic	17
Multiple Races	10
Asian	2

In addition to a general-education program that served Pre-K–fifth grade, this school had a specialized program that offered educational and therapeutic interventions for students with significant emotional and behavioral needs. This program is in its second year. The program’s total enrollment of 21 students included 19 boys and 2 girls. The racial demographics of this specialized program, classified by the school system, appear in Table 7.

Table 7

*Enrollment in Specialized Programs*

Race/ethnicity ( <i>n</i> = 21)	Percentage of each race/ethnicity
White/Caucasian	43
Black/African American	38
Multiple races	10
Hispanic	5
Asian	5



This program serviced children in Grades 1 through 5 who were identified through Individualized Education Program meetings. The percentage of students in this program who receive free and reduced lunches was 39%, and all students in the specialized program were classified as special-education students. Primary Special Education coding for students included Emotionally Disturbed, Autistic, Developmentally Delayed, Other Health Impaired, and Multiple Disabilities.

The school had evidence-based programs, Positive Behavior Interventions Support (PBIS), Life Science Crisis Intervention (LSCI) and Second Step in place to assist students and staff with discipline concerns. The school planned to implement these evidence-based practices along with restorative practices. The school has continued for several years to implement strategies suggested by PBIS. According to D. M. Ashley (2016), “PBIS is a tiered framework of positive behavior systems in a school. Success depends on having clear expectations that are taught, rehearsed, and reinforced consistently across settings” (p. 15). In addition, some staff members who worked in the specialized program received training in August 2018 on LSCI, which provides staff “with specific competencies for successfully managing crises with students showing six common patterns of self-defeating behaviors” (Long, Fecser, & Brendtro, 1998, p. 2).

The school went through several changes including a new principal and assistant principal. Five of the eight first responders were new to the school in the year of the study. Of the three first responders returning, one started a second year at the school and the other two first responders had been at the school for more than 5 years.

All participants in this study also participated in the nonviolent crisis-intervention training from the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI). Participants received training from school-

system staff members certified to teach this course. According to CPI's official website, it is a "core training program [that] equips staff with proven strategies for safely defusing anxious, hostile, or violent behavior at the earliest stage" (CPI, 2018, para. 1). During this training, staff members learned appropriate methods to physically restrain students and received information about when physical restraint may be necessary. This program promoted physical restraint as a last resort.

Dedicated time for classroom meetings was a scheduled part of the instructional day in this school. The school scheduled this time for direct instruction of socioemotional strategies and to discuss appropriate and expected behaviors. Starting in January, the school used the socioemotional program Second Step as a resource for class meetings in the morning. All classroom teachers in the school were expected to use the lessons weekly.

## **Environment**

The JEPD took place in the school's conference room. This was a small, comfortable room that offered privacy so conversations could take place confidentially and without interruption. The furniture is conducive to group and individual work. I provided snacks for each professional-development session. I conducted informal observations wherever first responders were responding to support calls in the school.

## **Participants**

Because the study focused on first responders, participants were a school administrator, a specialized-program coordinator, a guidance counselor, school therapists, and behavioral-support teachers who respond to support calls. These participants were selected because the research questions and study centered on this critically important group of stakeholders: first responders. I

addressed selection bias as I invited all first responders at the school to participate. All eight first responders at the school elected to participate in the JEPD course and the study.

Participants were Pre-K–fifth-grade elementary school staff members in a large Mid-Atlantic suburban school system. This school location was feasible and practical due to my proximity and direct connection to the study site. Because it was convenient, extensive, and frequent, data-collection occurred.

Some participants had earlier training in restorative practices, though limited. The school-administrator participant had attended a 2-day training on restorative practices, specifically designed for administrators, offered by the IIRP. Some other participants had read about restorative practices, but they had received little or no formal training. All participants were trained in CPI, and all staff members in the specialized program and one participant in the general-education program were trained in LSCI.

All participants received three CEU's for participating in the JEPD as an incentive to participate in the study and complete the coursework. To receive three CEU's, participants had to engage in 45 hours of coursework. Educators need credits for certification renewal required every 5 years. Grades are not awarded for coursework. Coursework was in a hybrid format, involving online and in-person participation. Some hours of coursework included informal observations of each other, self-reflection, and discussion of those observations.

I did not formally evaluate seven of the eight participants, though I serve as one of the supervisors at the school. I did formally evaluate one participant but not in the area of discipline responses. I took these measures to decrease how my position of power might influence the action research. While I was an integral part of the JEPD as the designer and deliverer, the

action research approach enabled me to explore that program while it was being implemented. Yet, I needed to ensure I minimized the chances of skewing results through my influence.

Participants received a \$5 gift card for each survey they completed. Because the survey was anonymous, I used a screenshot of the SurveyMonkey confirmation page as verification that participants had completed the survey. Each participant received up to \$15 during the study, which is within the threshold of the school-system guidelines. The surveys took no more than 10 minutes. Participants read several books during the course and kept most of the books and all distributed handouts.

I used ethical measures to gather participants. All potential participants had the option to participate or not participate in this research study. They were provided an informed-consent form as shown in Appendix I. I told course participants who declined to be part of the study that they would not be included in the study but would still be able to participate in the course. I kept all data collected as part of this study confidential and anonymous. All reflective journals, surveys, peer observations, and assignments were completed in SurveyMonkey, formatted for data to be collected anonymously. Participants chose a pseudonym which was on all assignments and information collected.

I served as the primary researcher while serving in a supervisory role for the school. My positionality may have influenced participants' decision to participate in the course, as discussed in Chapter 1. I sought and obtained approval for credit from the State Department of Education and developed and facilitated the JEPD.

### **Course Information: Job-embedded Professional Development**

Just-in-time, job-embedded assistance with follow-up is effective and was positively viewed by the first responders. Most studies showed positive improvements in achievement

when significant amounts of structured and sustained follow-up took place after teachers received the main professional-development activities. Although it may be ideal for all staff members to be trained in restorative practices, this study focused on the first step of providing professional development for the critical group who respond to discipline calls.

Croft et al. (2010) described two types of JEPD that were used to develop the course. The first type of JEPD takes place in the location of the support call in nearly real-time, away from students, centered on issues of actual practice. I incorporated this type of JEPD when participants were observed by peers or me when they were responding to support calls. They received feedback shortly after the observation using a tool based on Title's (2011) 5 R's. Participants completed a self-reflection of their responses to the support call using that tool. These observations and reflection opportunities allowed them to obtain direct feedback and reflection time about their practices in near real-time.

The other type of JEPD took place in the school shortly before or after instruction, away from students, and centered on issues of actual practice (Croft et al., 2010, p. 3). To meet this requirement for JEPD, throughout the JEPD course participants received direct instruction on restorative practices, engaged in discourse about their use of restorative practices, analyzed data from support calls from the past month, reflected on their responses to support calls, and set goals. Participants also discussed how they responded to situations and how they could respond in the future to minimize support calls and student-discipline referrals.

I developed a three-credit course that formed the basis for this study, which equated to 45 hours of JEPD. I designed this course to provide first responders with an opportunity to impact their use of restorative practices, positively impact discipline data, especially for African American students, and increase their use of restorative practices. Reflection and learning in

context (JEPD), which are components of Fullan's (2006) change theory, are strategies I consistently incorporated throughout the course. Staff analyzed the data from the support calls each month. Staff analyzed scenarios, read about restorative practices, and reflected on their interactions with students. I facilitated the JEPD. I developed the course and secured the state's Department of Education approval so participants received credit. The course included 45 hours of in-person, online, and in-person/online (hybrid) engagement in restorative practices. I created all the lesson plans and made decisions regarding the instructional materials to be used. One benefit of action research is that adjustments can be made while completing a study, as the goal of the research is to understand the current situation and make a difference in one's personal setting (Herr & Anderson, 2014). To assess the current situation, participants provided feedback about the course after each session and I adjusted the course when necessary to best meet the needs of participants.

Part of the JEPD included peer observations by other participants in the study. I used an informal feedback form, based on the 5 R's, by Title (2011), to focus the observations. Participants observed each other and provided feedback. Participants met with the observer and reflected on peer observations. Seven of the eight participants entered at least one reflective journal from the peer observations in SurveyMonkey. The group also discussed peer observations in JEPD sessions.

These observations are the essence of JEPD because they allowed school personnel to participate in a reflective dialogue about their use of restorative practices with colleagues. As recommended in Fullan's change theory, reflections on current practices were a major part of the JEPD. Throughout the course, participants kept a reflective journal. The journal prompts directly

aligned with all research questions, as shown in Appendix D. I kept a reflective researcher journal, making entries during and after classes.

### **Pilot Study**

A content expert who is a school administrator with extensive behavior-management expertise reviewed the questions. Feedback focused on questions' clarity and applicability. An expert in the field who had just published a book focused on restorative practices reviewed my data tools and provided feedback. E-mail correspondence was sent to reSolutionaries Inc., the company associated with *The 5 R's of Restorative Practices*. I e-mailed the observational tool and received feedback about how to more closely align the tool with the 5 R's. I also sent this paper to a professional editor who provided feedback on the wording used in the tools.

### **Data-Collection and -Analysis Procedures**

I used change theory and restorative-justice theory to guide the creation of data sources and informed analysis. Specifically, Title's (2011) framework that gives five basic values of restorative justice/practices was the basis for the training, reflection, and evaluation related to the use of restorative practices. I used these guiding principles for protocol design, for the development of the training for the first responders, for the basis of reflection and discussion during professional development, and for data analysis.

I employed quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Using quantitative and qualitative methods allows for stronger inferences and provides a powerful replication of findings when the different measures have similar results; when the results are different, these methods allow for reflection, reassessment, and refinement (Maruyama & Ryan, 2014, p. 442). Using both methods leads to more understanding of the research than solely quantitative or qualitative methods (Palinkas, Horwitz, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). I coupled the

qualitative measures, which included participants' and my journals and informal feedback forms, with the quantitative measures, which included surveys; data sets associated with the rate and number of student discipline referrals, restraints, and seclusions; and support log data. I describe each evaluation method in the sections that follow.

### **Reflective Journals**

Participants reflected on their application of restorative practices in journals as part of their coursework expectations. The reflective journals provided insights into each class participant's thoughts and feelings associated with handling discipline situations. Participants completed reflections at the beginning of the session in the reflection journal and at the end of the session through a course-feedback reflection form. Journal prompts required staff to reflect on their use of restorative practices in each session. The prompts directly related to the research questions listed in Appendix B. I collected and coded the journals seeking emerging themes using the coding program NVivo. NVivo is an electronic coding program. At the beginning of the course and at the end of the course, participants completed a journal prompt that required them to analyze the same scenario and indicate how they would respond to the situation. The scenario is in Appendix A.

I created a standard form for informal observations using Title's (2011) framework, which is based on the five basic values or "R's" of restorative justice/practices: relationship, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration. This informal observation tool appears in Appendix C. I used the form to informally observe participants. Participants also used the form to observe each other and provide informal feedback. Each participant received an informal feedback form from peers during the study and reflected on the feedback received.



## **Discipline/Call-Log Data**

Information gathered from student-discipline referrals can be “potentially useful for facilitating decision making regarding school-wide and/or individual student behavior” (Irvin et al., 2006, p. 10). The school collects referral, seclusion, and restraint data and reports them to the state. The school creates support-call logs, used for discipline decision-making at the school level. I used all discipline data for this study as well. I brought support-call logs, restraint data, and referral data to class where participants discussed and analyzed them monthly. To ensure confidentiality, I replaced any names of students and teachers I used to report finding with pseudonyms. Participants worked in teams to disaggregate the data from all above-mentioned sources.

All PBIS schools collect support-call log data in an electronic system called School-wide Intervention System (SWIS). One expectation of a PBIS school is for the support-call data to be entered into SWIS. Highly functioning PBIS schools frequently analyze the data and create and adjust plans to improve student behavior. I collected SWIS data at an aggregate level. The data collected were referral data, categorized by major and minor offenses. I reference aggregate data from 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 in this study.

When analyzing PBIS data, major offenses are incidents that require an official referral; examples are fighting and threats. Minor offenses are less intensive offenses that require a support call, such as continual noise in class or the refusal to complete work. Participants analyzed these data and teams discussed their level of use of restorative practices. In addition to the SWIS data system, the school selected for this study also collects data in a call log housed electronically in a SharePoint electronic spreadsheet. The school calls this data their support call log. The school implemented this data chart, based on my suggestion. When staff members call

for support from first responders, the front office staff records the student's name and grade, the teacher who is having difficulty with the student, and the start and end times of the support call. First responders later add specific details such as notes regarding parent contact or additional information gathered when responding to the call. During JEPD, teams analyzed the data, discussed trends, and made action plans for improvement. Participants used descriptive statistics to analyze student-discipline referrals, seclusions, restraints, and behavior-support calls.

## **Survey**

Before the start of the course (November), midway through the course (February), and at the end of the course (May), I conducted the same survey using SurveyMonkey. I asked participants to complete the surveys on their electronic devices and gave them \$5 gift cards for each survey completed to encourage all participants to complete the surveys. To receive the gift card, they printed the end-of-survey confirmation page and showed it to me. I used descriptive statistics to analyze the results.

Questions on the survey directly related to the research questions, as shown in Appendix H and the 5 R's framework by Title (2011). I created the survey questions after referring to the Student Assessment of their Learning Gains (SALG) survey and directly related to the research questions. Each survey appears in Appendices F, G and H. The SALG survey is a "template" instrument offered on the SALG website. It features 46 sample questions, grouped in sections such as "class and lab activities," "resources," and "skills." SALG users are "invited to use or adapt these questions in order to reflect their own course-specific learning objectives, to drop those that do not apply, and to add others" (Seymour, Wiese, & Barrie-Hunter, 2000, p. 5). This tool is "focused on questions about how much students judge those aspects of the course that their teachers identify as important to their learning actually enabled their learning" (Seymour et

al., 2000, p. 5). Teachers identify important learning by selecting questions that assess the concepts teachers believe are important.

The SALG questions correlated with this study's research questions. The SALG addresses (a) how the aspects of a course increased learning, (b) gains in understanding of specific concepts, (c) gains in specific skills taught, and (d) the integration of newly learned skills into practice (Seymour et al., 2000, p. 6). Researchers have tested the SALG for validity and reliability. According to the SALG survey site, it has been used by 19,362 instructors and has yielded 393,696 student responses. I used the SALG survey as a guide to help me develop questions for the surveys.

### **Trustworthiness and Validity**

This study's methodology included data triangulation. If researchers gain corroboration from three different sources, the analysis gains in trustworthiness (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013, p. 299). I collected and compared reflective journals and survey data to discover trends and maintain consistency. In addition, I disaggregated and analyzed referral/support-log data. These sources of data helped ensure trends emerged and decisions were made based on various sources of information.

Researcher bias was a validity threat. Therefore, I tried to be mindful of my biases while identifying trends from multiple sources by questioning my analysis of trends and considering them multiple times. My strong interest in the possible impact of restorative practices could have interfered with objectivity when interpreting data. Acknowledging my biases was one way to prevent them from impacting the objective interpretation of the data in this study.

Reactivity could have also posed as a validity threat. I serve as one of the supervisors of the participants in the study. As a researcher and supervisor, I kept in mind that my presence

could influence the environment and the actions and responses of participants. Making the surveys and reflective journals anonymous and encouraging honest discourse during the class sessions minimized reactivity. Participants completed all journals and surveys through SurveyMonkey and were set to be confidential. Each participant chose a pseudonym at the start of the course and used it throughout the course when submitting any materials.

The testing effect may also have been a validity threat in this study. Participants were volunteers who expressed interest in learning about restorative practices. As the researcher, I am also one of the participants' supervisors. Because I am one of the participants' new supervisors, some participants may have felt coerced to participate. Therefore, the results may not generalize to other subjects and schools.

### **Reliability**

Miles et al. (2013) provided suggestions on strategies to increase the reliability, dependability, and auditability of qualitative research. They suggested researchers (a) use clear research questions, (b) explicitly describe their role, (c) report meaningful findings paralleling data sources, (d) ensure data reliability connects to theory, (e) collect data broadly (f) perform data checks, and (g) use peer review (p. 278). To meet these expectations for reliability, this study included these characteristics. First, clear research questions served as the driving force of the research. I wrote the research questions clearly, and the sub-questions aided in answering the primary research question.

I explicitly explained my role as the researcher as detailed in the participant consent form. When reviewing and signing the form, participants had an opportunity to ask questions. In addition, at the beginning of the presurvey, midsurvey and postsurvey, I provided an overview of

my role in writing and required participants to indicate that they understand my role on the first survey question. Surveys appear in Appendices F, G and H.

I used and reported the parallel data sources shown in Tables 4 and 5. The study and data collection directly connected to theory and the research questions—specifically change theory and restorative-justice —drove the study and data collection. All data measures aligned with the research questions, created based on both theories. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Table 5 includes an overview of how I used quantitative and qualitative data measures in the study. Finally, I performed data checks. To increase the reliability of the data, I also conducted member checking, asking each school team to review the collected referral and support-log-call data and analyze the data as a team.

For this action research study, I was an insider, in collaboration with other insiders (Herr & Anderson, 2014). In education, this researcher positionality is sometimes referenced as inquiry groups or leadership teams (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 36). Because I am part of the school system and have a supervisory role with the staff participating in the study, I have an inside connection with them. The degree to which researchers position themselves as insiders or outsiders will determine how they frame epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 30).

The action research methodology I employed was impacted by my positionality. An insider in collaboration or collaborative inquiry groups engages in inquiry in ways that help the group move from working as isolated individuals *toward a collaborative community* (Herr & Anderson, 2014). “Action Research dissertations are often done by organizational insiders who see it as a way to deepen their own reflection on practice. ... In such cases the researcher and practitioner may be one and the same” (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 36). Action research is often

performed in education and participatory action research is also a way to “generate knowledge of practice from the inside out” (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 36). This research method seeks to engage members in learning and change; participants work toward influencing organizational change and offer opportunities for personal, professional, and institutional transformation (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 36).

I used JEPD as the format for the course sessions. This type of professional development can take place in real time in the classroom with current students, in the classroom nearly in real-time and away from students, or shortly before or after instruction and away from students (Croft et al., 2010, p. 5). For this study, I conducted JEPD shortly before or after instruction and away from students. Because I have an insider position, I had frequent contact with study participants. This contact, in turn, offered the opportunity for ongoing coaching and feedback when responding to support calls, and for classes to be held on an ongoing basis.

As Herr and Anderson (2014) noted, “One way to deal with bias is to acknowledge one’s presence in the study and build in self-reflection” (p. 35) They also confirmed that, “knowledge production from all positions is valid as long as one is honest and reflective about one’s multiple positionalities” (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 48). As the researcher, I reflected throughout the study. In journal entries, I considered possible biases and how my positionality may have impacted the results. I served as the primary researcher but also served in a supervisory role for the school. I was also the facilitator for each session. According to Herr and Anderson, “one’s positionality has to be carefully thought through” (2014, p. 42). I reflected deeply about my positionality in this exploratory action-research study. I put several measures in place to increase the reliability of this study and its findings. The Miles et al. (2013) suggestions drove this quest for reliability.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This action-research study examined the impact of JEPD on first responders. The participants, a group of eight first responders at a school in a Mid-Atlantic county, participated in a 7-month JEPD, created based on Lewin's and Fullan's (2006) change theory and Title's (2011) 5 R's of restorative practices. This group of first responders included a counselor, therapists, school administration, program coordinator, and behavioral-support specialists who all were staff members at the same school. The research question and subquestions that drove this action research follow:

1. To what extent and in what ways does JEPD in restorative practices impact first responders?
  - a. How does JEPD in restorative practices affect first responders':
    - i. knowledge of restorative practices?
    - ii. use of restorative practices?
    - iii. perceived effectiveness of the use of restorative practices?
    - iv. perceptions of their abilities to teach/coach others about restorative practices?
    - v. effectiveness of addressing student discipline referrals according to teacher perceptions?
    - vi. responses to discipline calls with African American males?
  - b. What is the impact of the premises of change theory driving job-embedded Professional Development on First Responders?

Data sources were scenarios, surveys, course feedback, and reflective journals that were completed by all eight participants and discussed during JEPD course sessions. Participants completed surveys in December before the start of the JEPD, in February, and in June at the end

of the JEPD. As one of the journal entries, participants analyzed and reported how they would respond to a scenario before the JEPD began and at the end of the experience. Participants also completed class feedback forms at the end of each class. Participants provided reflections in journals at the beginning of each class. Behavior referral data were recorded into the student data system (SWIS), and the school front office staff logged all student-support calls into a SharePoint Excel document. First responders then discussed and analyzed these data throughout the JEPD.

I uploaded scenario responses, open-ended pre- and postsurvey questions, JEPD course evaluations, and reflective journal entries to NVivo. I read and analyzed each participant's response for each data measure seeking major terms or concepts expressed by each response. After reading and analyzing, I recorded major terms or concepts as themes; if responses related to already developed themes, I coded them under those themes. When I was finished coding all responses, I looked at the developed themes and collapsed synonymous terms.

I analyzed responses to the pre-, mid-, and postsurvey questions separately, using descriptive statistics. I analyzed and considered measures of central tendency (mean and mode), measures of frequency (count, percentage), and measures of variability (standard deviation), for each question. I also coded open-response questions in NVivo with the same method as the scenario responses.

I administered a survey to classroom teachers at the school. The survey had multiple choice and open-ended questions. Teachers completed the survey anonymously on the SurveyMonkey website. I analyzed survey results using descriptive statistics and coding in NVivo in the same manner as the survey. I analyzed support calls using descriptive statistics. I used measures of frequency (count, percentage) to analyze the data. I also sorted data by student



names and race to seek trends. I changed student names to pseudonyms to preserve students' confidentiality. I analyzed and reported these data. I analyzed restraint and seclusion data reported on the support-call data sheet for the school specialized program. SWIS creates reports that calculate measures of frequency (count, percentage). Student-discipline referrals and first responders' decisions after handling the referral were entered into SWIS. I gathered student-discipline referrals and suspension data from SWIS.

I coded and rated the responses on the May and November administrations of the scenario using the observational tool created using Title's (2011) 5 R's of restorative practices. I made connections between the 5 R's—relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration—and participants' responses. I then gave a numerical rating from 1 to 4, based on the open-ended responses received from participants, with one being no evidence of the 5 R's and 4 being clearly evident. I then added the scores and calculated a percentage, based on the total possible points for each of the 5 R's.

I interpreted data to answer the two research questions. I used each data source to collect information to answer each subquestion, shown on Table 5. I summarize the data related to each subquestion in the next chapter.

### **Analysis**

I analyzed data to answer each research question and subquestion. I report coding, analysis, and calculations associated with each subquestion, aligned with data-collection method. After all coding analysis was complete for the research question or subquestion, I summarized the findings. This summary consolidates an analysis of all data measures in relation to the research question.

## The Impact of JEPD in Restorative Practices on First Responders

### First responders' knowledge of restorative practice.

**Survey.** The eight participants rated their knowledge of the five restorative techniques (affective statements, restorative questions, proactive circles, responsive circles, restorative meetings/conferences) using a Likert-type scale ranging from not at all (1) to a great deal (5). Based on survey responses, first responders' perceptions of their knowledge of restorative practices increased from the presurvey to the postsurvey. On the presurvey, the average self-rating of knowledge ranged from 2.5 (between just a little and somewhat) for less formal restorative practices to 2.13 (just a little) for more formal restorative practices (see Figure 5). Participants noted they had no knowledge of some restorative practices prior to the JEPD, with a range from 13% to 38% of the participants indicating knowledge of any techniques (see Figure 6).

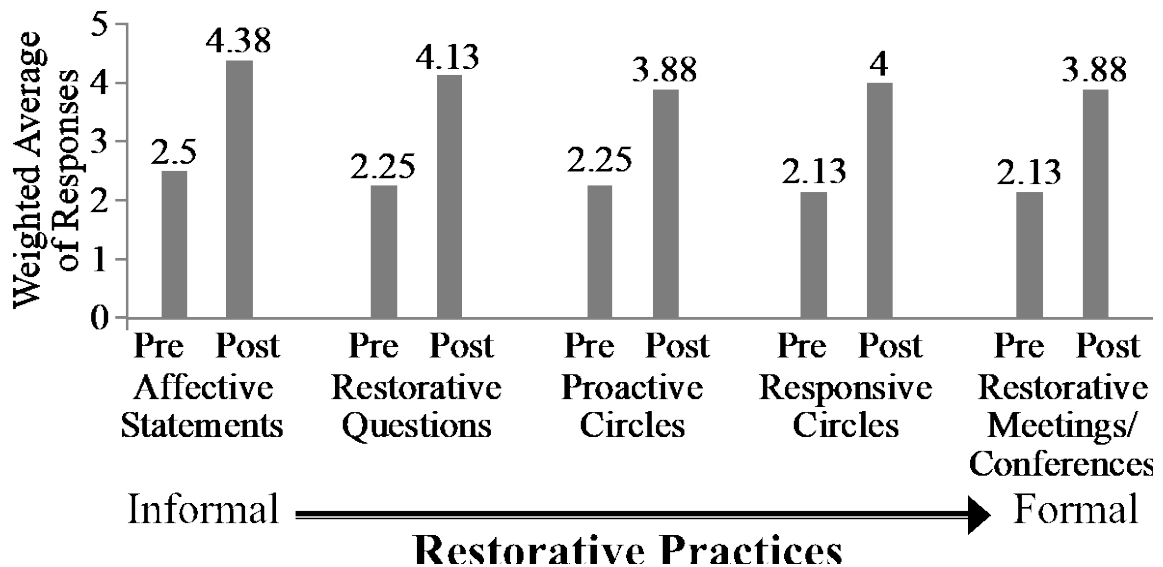


Figure 5. First responders' knowledge of restorative practice techniques: Weighted average of responses.

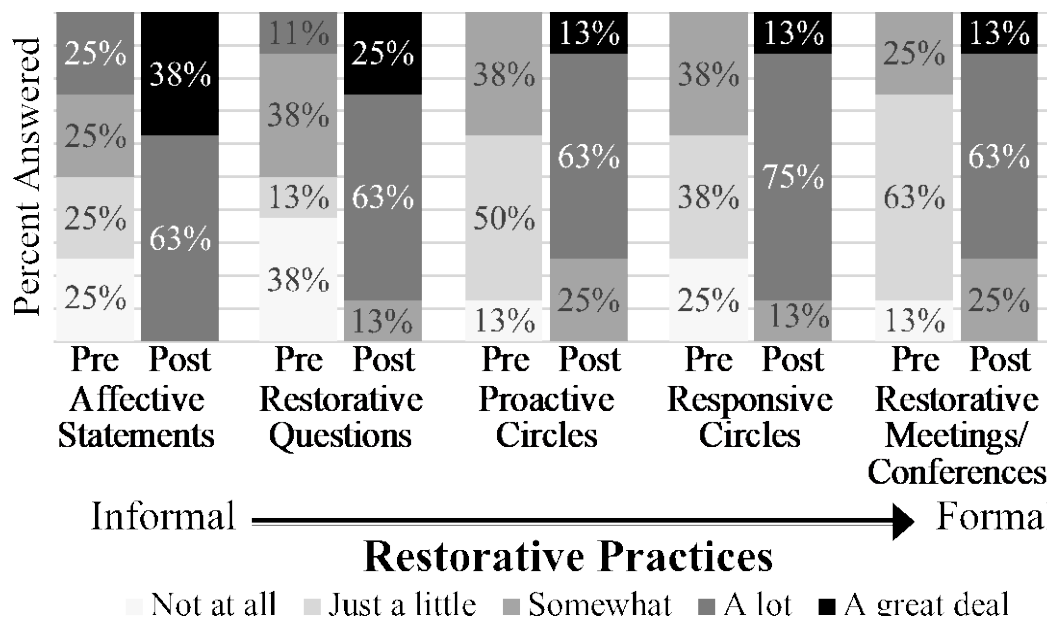


Figure 6. First responders' knowledge of Restorative Practice Techniques: Percent answered.

As seen in Figure 5, as restorative practice techniques became more formal, positive perceptions of first responders' knowledge of restorative practices decreased on the preassessment. First responders' weighted average of responses increased most (1.9) for affective statements and restorative questions and least for proactive circles (1.6). As shown in Figure 5, after the JEPD, postsurvey results indicated that the first responders' perception of their knowledge increased to weighted averages from 3.88 (between somewhat and a lot) to 4.38 (between a great deal to a lot). Postsurvey results (Figure 6) showed that zero participants felt they had no knowledge of any of the practices. All participants believed they had some knowledge of the restorative techniques with a majority believing they had a lot of knowledge. For all practices at the end of the JEPD, at least 75% of participants perceived their knowledge in all five restorative practice techniques to be a lot or a great deal. Participants perceived themselves most knowledgeable of the informal practices on the pre- and postsurvey, and

perception of knowledge decreased with formality of the processes on both surveys, except for responsive circles on the postsurvey.

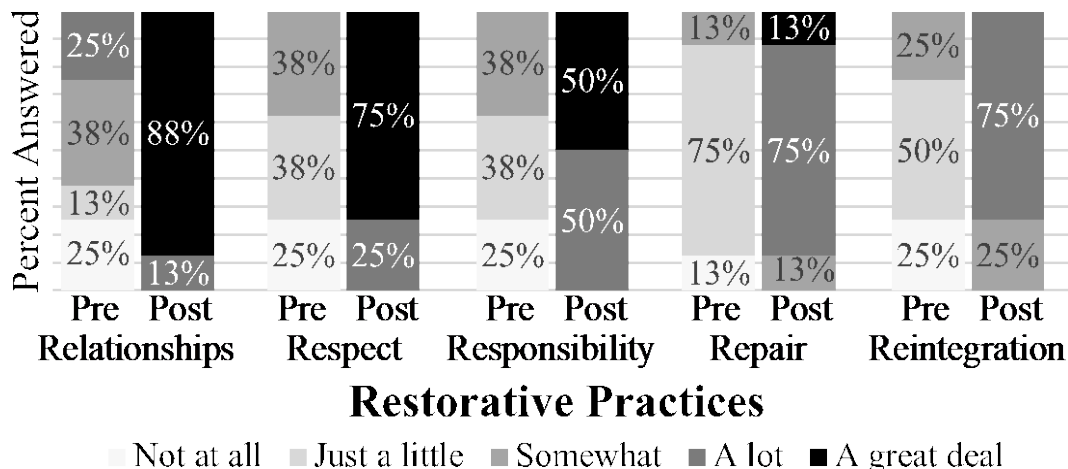


Figure 7. First responders' knowledge of 5 R's: Percent answered.

Data showed that knowledge of effective implementation increased in all five components of the framework from pre- to postsurvey scores. Although the 5 R's have no hierarchy, the data indicate that participants believed relationships, respect, and responsibility are more effectively implemented than reintegration and repair. As seen in Figure 7, on the postsurvey, no participants indicated they had a great deal of knowledge about reintegration. In regard to repair, only 13%, one participant, indicated a great deal of knowledge in regard to repair and most participants, (75%) indicated a lot of knowledge about repairing situations.

Participants were also asked to rate their knowledge of how to effectively implement each of the components of the Restorative Justice Framework: Relationships, Respect, Responsibility, Repair and Reintegration as seen in Figure 8. The survey indicated that staff knowledge of implementation started at between just a little (2.0) and somewhat (2.63) and increased to scores ranging from a lot (3.75) to a great deal (4.88). As seen in Figure 8, the largest gains in knowledge were in respect (2.6) and the lowest gain was in reintegration (1.75).

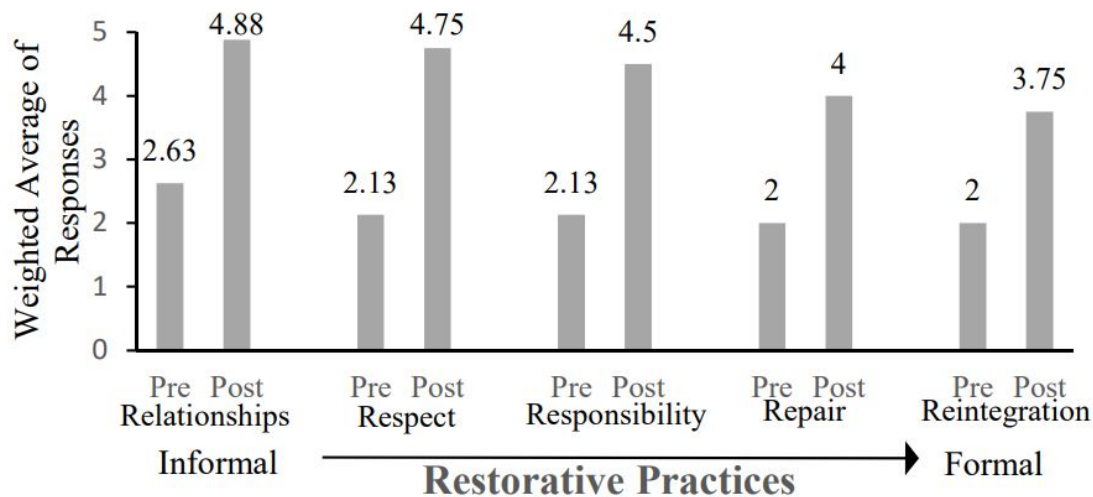


Figure 8. First responders' knowledge of restorative techniques: Weighted average of responses.

When coding, open-response questions on the survey, a theme that emerged was that participants increased ability to understand students beyond their behavior. Participants mentioned “focusing on the behavior and not the person” and “approaching the situation in less punitive ways.” Participants mentioned several times the importance of relationships with students. For example, one participant wrote, when asked how this JEPD impacted interactions with African American students, that they’ve gained an “understanding [of] the importance of relationships as well as the importance of empowering them by giving them voice and a platform to be heard.”

***Class reflections and class feedback forms.*** Coding of the class reflections and class feedback forms revealed that the first responder’s language with students changed as a result of the JEPD. Staff indicated feeling comfortable with affective statements, though they continue to adjust when using them and speaking with students. For example, in one participant’s journal

entry from the third session, the participant wrote, “Affective statements are an area in which I continue to grow, especially with the refined component of placing my “why” in the second portion of the feelings statement.” Another participant shared from the class reflection from the third session that, the JEPD “helped me to change the way I use affective statements—focus on the behavior and not the person. This takes out the blame/guilt and can allow for growth in empathy and understanding.”

A challenge mentioned several times in the class reflections and feedback forms was the participant’s knowledge of how to manage and create time to implement the strategies effectively. Responses indicated that having time to do a preconference with all parties was important, but ensuring that all stakeholders participated was a challenge. Also, allowing time for students and staff to process the situation and ensuring that all parties were ready to repair the situation was an area staff believed were areas of growth in knowledge. In the sixth JEPD course reflections, a participant made a statement that summarized participants’ concerns.

I think the biggest challenge that is interfering with the implementation of restorative practices is time. As far as the restorative language and building relationships, I think both individually and as a team we have made progress. In regards to the restorative conferences after more significant events, we tend to run into time being an issue with getting all parties together and/or not being able to facilitate the pre-conference prior to the more formal one.

**Summary.** In summary, first responders perceived their knowledge to increase in restorative techniques and knowledge about effective implementation of the 5 R’s. Perceived knowledge of the 5 R’s and restorative techniques, based on weighted averages, were all over 3.75, with many over 4, which is “a lot.”

Perceptions of their knowledge increased most with the informal techniques of affective statements and restorative questions. Both techniques refer to the language used when responding to a situation. Participants felt more knowledgeable about responsive circles than proactive circles, even though they started the study feeling more comfortable with proactive circles. First responders believed they were the most knowledgeable about relationships, respect, and responsibility. They made less gains in knowledge with repair and reintegration, with no participant feeling they had a great deal of knowledge about reintegration.

**First responders' use of restorative practices.**

*Survey.* Survey results indicated an increase in the use of all restorative techniques after JEPD. The presurvey results ranged from a majority of participants not using practices such as proactive and reactive circles at all to participants using practices like affective statements, once a week. Prior to JEPD, less formal measures, two of eight participants did not use affective statements and restorative questions at all. Only two of eight participants used the more formal measures: proactive circles, responsive circles, and restorative conferences. Less formal measures, such as affective statements and restorative questions, ranged from staff not using them at all to staff using them multiple times a day with an average of staff using them once a week. The more formal measures showed most participants using those practices once a month or not at all (see Figure 9).

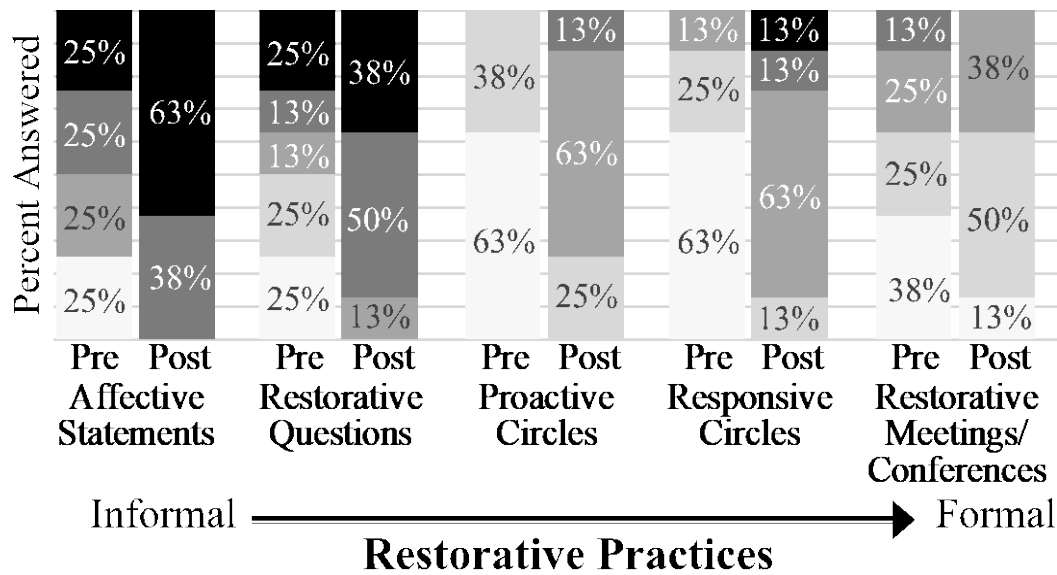


Figure 9. Figure responders' use of restorative techniques: Percent answered.

The postsurvey data showed an increase in use of all restorative practices. The frequency in use ranged from restorative meetings/conferences being used on average once a month to affective statements being used daily, with most participants (five of eight) indicating they use the strategies multiple times a day.

Participants were asked to rate their enthusiasm about using restorative practices on the pre- and postsurvey using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from not at all to a great deal. In the presurvey, 50% (four) participants indicated they were somewhat enthusiastic, 25% (two) indicated that their enthusiasm was a lot and 25% (two) indicated a great deal. On the postsurvey, participants' responses shifted a lot and a great deal: 50% (four) indicated a lot and 50% (four) indicated a great deal.



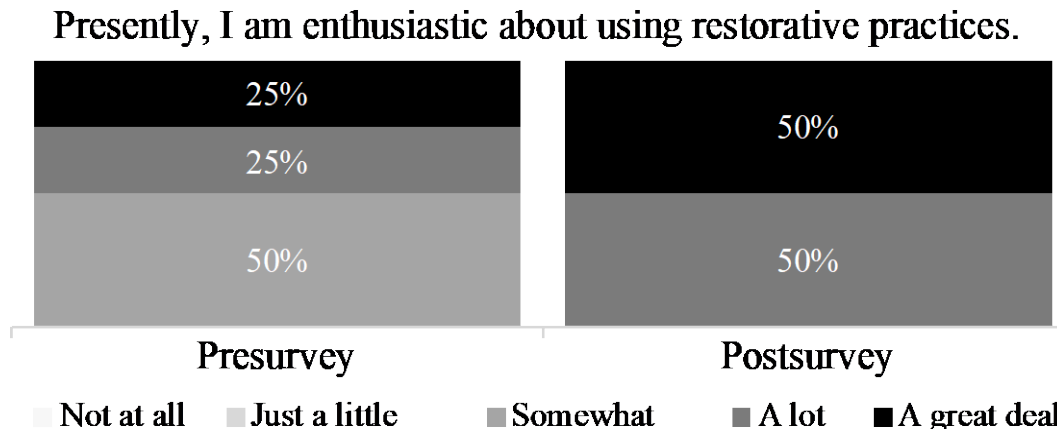
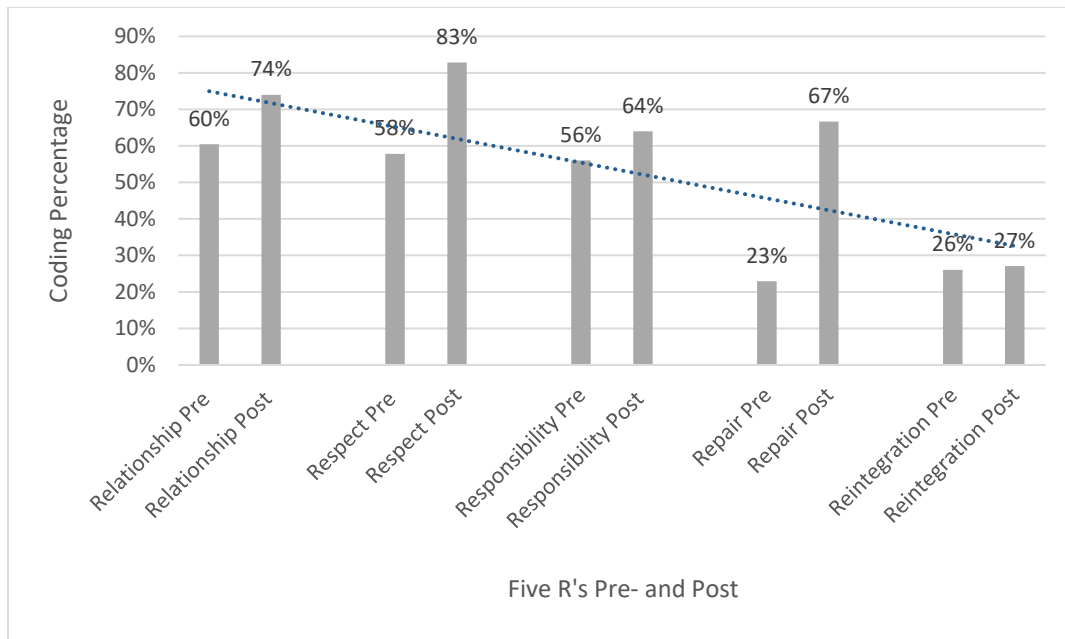


Figure 10. Participants' rating of enthusiasm.

**Scenarios.** I gave participants the same scenario before (November) and at the end of (May) the JEPD through SurveyMonkey. I asked participants to indicate how they would handle the scenario found in Appendix E. In May, I also asked participants to reflect on how they thought they would respond differently from November. After submitting responses through SurveyMonkey, I gave participants their original responses, read over them, and shared reflections verbally.

I coded and rated responses on the May and November administrations of the scenario using the observational tool created using *The 5 R's of Restorative Practices* by Title (2011). I identified connections between the 5 R's and participants' responses and assigned a numerical score between 1 and 4 to the responses, with 1 indicating no evidence found and 4 being clearly evident. I then added the scores and calculated a percentage based on the total possible points for each of the 5 R's and compared the percentages (see Figure 11).



*Figure 11.* Scenario pre- and postscores: Coding percentage.

Based on participants' responses, an overall increase emerged in the use of restorative practices, based on the same scenario. Respect and relationships for the pre- and postscenario showed the most evident change in use. Respect, relationships, and repair all achieved at least a 14% increase from pre- to postscenario. Of the 5 R's, repair increased most from pre- to postscenario. The reference to use of repair strategies almost tripled. Staff demonstrated an increase in understanding through the scenarios that repair should be used when handling discipline situations and demonstrated how to use it in their responses. Reintegration was the least evident in participants' pre- and postresponses. Only a 1% increase emerged in reintegration use from pre- to postscenario.

Also, after participants completed their postscenario and submitted their answers, I returned their prerresponses and asked them to reflect on the differences they noticed from the

pre- to postassessment. One participant's quotation synthesized the themes that emerged from the coding of the scenario question:

In the beginning of the year I would try to do all this in one day, which would rush the outcome and might not have included all parties who had been impacted. I may have also focused on consequences rather than repairing harm done and restoring the relationships.

The themes that emerged from coding the responses to the scenario survey questions were that participants would "take more time" to get information/preconference with all parties, including families and other students. As before, some may not have taken the time to get the perspective from the child who did the harm. Participants noted several times they would now develop a formal plan after their response. The last theme that emerged was that they would now "address the harm or repair the harm."

After participants submitted their responses, I asked them verbally to discuss with the group how their approach to this situation would have been different in the beginning of the school year. One participant read the paper and disgustedly tossed it away from herself as she was not happy with her preresponse and stated that it was "wrong." Discussion ensued that it was not "wrong"; rather, it was a way of handling the situation with more of a therapeutic response than a facilitator, as is seen in restorative-practices situations.

Other participants also remarked how much their thinking had changed and shared how they could see how much they had learned. Another participant also said that before the response to the situation would have been to deliver a generic lesson to everyone in the class to teach everyone in the class about the discipline concern without any specifics to the situation. After the JEPD, the participant realized the importance of focusing on the harm directly for the specific students involved and addressing how each participant's actions impacted others. A big change was participants' comfort level with bringing parents into discussions about the situations.

Another participant said that before, they did most of the leading when responding to situations; now they would be more of a facilitator.

***Reflective journal.*** Participants completed a reflective journal before each session and shared their reflections on their use of restorative practices. Some participants described ways their approach and thinking regarding discipline situations have changed. One participant noted,

In discussions with parents when asking about discipline of other students involved in situations my verbiage and explanations have changed from stating that we cannot share the disciplinary actions for other students to a conversation about restorative mindsets and getting students together to learn about the perception and perspectives of others in situations.

Another participant shared, “We tend to focus on the student who has caused the harm, where now I feel like I am taking more time to bring those students together to have both parties debrief.” Last, a participant said, “The material and resources provided in this class have changed the way I approach a number of situations through the day, at work and in my home life.”

A theme that emerged from coding the data was that first responders started seeing the student beyond the behavior. One participant noted in the reflection journals that the “focus is on the behavior and not the person. This takes out the blame/guilt and can allow for growth in empathy and understanding.” Another participant noted that they now “approach situations in less punitive ways and consider the underlying reasoning for behaviors. That has helped me to focus on how to better help the student.”

***Survey.*** Enthusiasm about using restorative practices increased from pre- to postsurvey. Participants perceived that their use of restorative language has increased during the 7 months of

JEPD. Participants noted increasing their use of affective statements to daily or multiple times during the day and 88% (seven) of the participants use restorative questions daily or multiple times during the day.

Participants' responses to situations have changed as well. As I expected, participants responded they use fewer of the more formal techniques of restorative practices than the informal ones. The use of responsive circles, proactive circles and restorative meetings/conferences increased from the pre- to postsurvey. Responsive circles increased for most responses from 63% (five ) of the participants not using responsive circles at all to 63% of participants (five) using them once a week and 26% (two) of the participants using them daily. Participants used proactive circles less than reactive circles with 63% (five) of the participants using them once a week and 13% (one) using them daily. Based on the data, participants are more likely to call stakeholders together to discuss discipline situations as a response to discipline situations.

Participants have increased use of all five of the 5 R's in restorative practices. The knowledge that repair should be used almost tripled from pre- to postscenario. Participants indicated their knowledge of how repair should be integrated into a discipline response in their answers to the scenarios. Repair and responsibility are components used but continue to be areas that are not used as frequently as others. Participants reported they started to see the students "beyond the behavior." Participants noted that, after participating in the course, they realized the importance of listening to all stakeholders in a discipline situation, taking all viewpoints into account, and addressing the needs of all students who are involved in a situation.

### **First responders' perceived effectiveness of the use of restorative practices.**

*Survey.* Based on the pre- and postsurvey results, first responders' perceived effectiveness in the use of restorative practices increased in all five restorative-practice

techniques. The results of the presurvey showed that participants believed they were somewhat effective to not effective at all for all five restorative-practice techniques. Participants thought they were most effective with affective statements, with three participants expressing thinking they were very effective, based on the presurvey. Affective statements, the least formal restorative practice, increased from three participants thinking they were very effective to seven of the eight participants (87%) thinking they were very effective to extremely effective in their restorative practices, as shown on the postsurvey.

Restorative questions also showed an increase of perceived effectiveness from just a little effective to somewhat effective (2.63) with two participants not thinking they were at all effective, increasing to participants rating their effectiveness as a lot (4.0). At the end of the JEPD, seven of the eight participants believed their effectiveness in using restorative questions was very effective or extremely effective, with all eight participants feeling at least somewhat effective in implementing the restorative questions (see Figure 12).

Also, perceived effectiveness with responsive circles increased from 50% of participants feeling somewhat effective and 50% feeling not effective all on the presurvey to perceived effectiveness between somewhat effective for 63% (five) of the participants and very effective for 38% (three) of the participants. Participants indicated minimal increases in their level of effectiveness in implementing restorative meetings/conferences: 37.5% (three) thought they were not effective at all and 50% (four) believed they were just a little effective/somewhat effective when implementing restorative meetings/conference on the presurvey. The mean of the scores was 2.2, which was just a little effective. On the postsurvey, the overall mean increased to 3.13, somewhat effective, with no participants feeling not at all effective (see Figure 13).

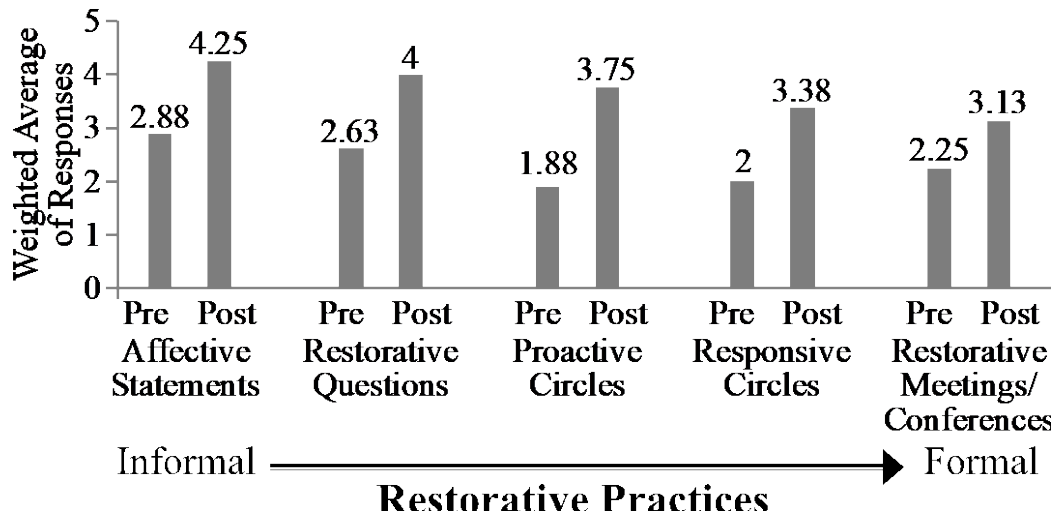


Figure 12. First responders' level of effectiveness using restorative practice: Weighted average of responses.

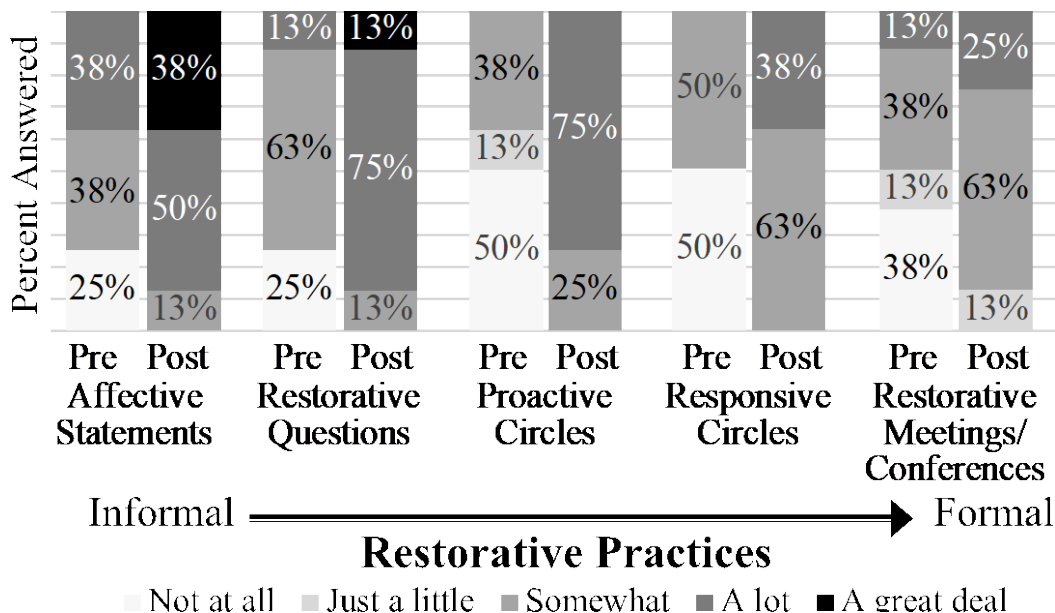


Figure 13. First responders' level of effectiveness using restorative practices: Percent answered.

In addition, I asked participants if they believed their use of restorative practices changed the atmosphere of the school: 75% (six of eight) participants thought their use of restorative practices changed the atmosphere of the school a lot/a great deal and 25% (two) felt it changed the atmosphere somewhat. On the presurvey, participants indicated they responded to discipline

situations using a restorative approach just a little to somewhat (2.5) with one participant not responding restoratively at all. On the postsurvey, participants showed an increase with all responding restoratively: 50% indicated a lot and 50% indicated a great deal.

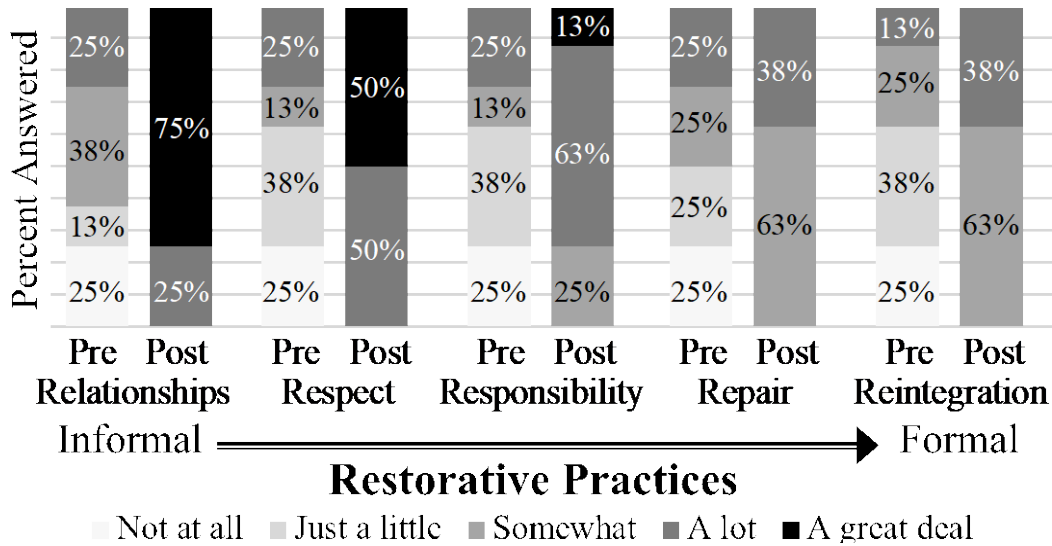


Figure 14. First responders' level of effectiveness with five Rs.

A question on the survey showed that confidence in using restorative practices aligned with perceived effectiveness with most participants lacking confidence with proactive circles, responsive circles, and restorative meetings/conferences but believing they are somewhat effective to extremely effective with affective statements and restorative questions.

Presurvey data indicated that 40 to 62% of participants rated their effectiveness in using each of the five components of the restorative justice framework as not effective to just a little effective. The postsurvey data indicated that 75 to 100% of participants rated their effectiveness in implementing relationships, respect, and responsibility as very effective to extremely effective. Participants perceived they were somewhat effective in implementing repair and reintegration at 63% (five) of the participants and very effective by 38% (three) of the participants.



On the postsurvey, I asked participants if they experienced a situation where restorative practices were effective and to give some details of the situation. One participant shared that the success was that children were able to be self-reflective. Another participant stressed that restorative practices were effective when she had initiated preconferecing. A third shared that involving the family in the discussion about behavior yielded positive results.

A participant shared that an effective result of restorative practices was staff reflection, which led to a decrease at the end of the year on the use of restraints. During the data analysis, participants who served in the specialized program decided to create a reflection form for participants to complete when restraints occurred. The team was very concerned about how restraints were impacting staff and student relationships and that when thinking of other responses, they would resort to putting their hands on the students. As a result of our discussion at our JEPD, one participant created a reflection form to be completed by anyone who restrained a student. The participant asked me for feedback and adjusted the form. This same participant also created a new format to analyze the data for restraints and seclusions. The new format has the names of staff who restrained students and student names. The team used this information to look for trends on which staff members were restraining students most and if a staff member continually restrained the same student.

The participants implemented the new data-chart format in April and the reflection form in May. This reflection form was developed from this JEPD. The number of restraints after the form was implemented dropped substantially, diminishing from a total of 37 restraints in a week in March to as few as no restraints in a week in June. The average number of restraint use in March was 20; in April, eight; in May, eight; and in June, two.

One participant responded in the postsurvey that they created a restorative circle that included a group of students involved in a bus issue. As a result, students were able to respond to one another in a more appropriate manner when issues presented themselves. Another participant wrote about a successful situation when a group of students did a restorative circle and it was thought to be initially ineffective by the participant until the “students paused and reflected on themselves and the situation. Each student took responsibility for their piece and developed strategies for how to repair and restore relationships ... after the circle positive changes were seen.”

Last, a participant noted a time when they conducted a restorative circle with the entire class and the teacher. The teacher was upfront and honest with the class about how their behavior made her feel and the impact of their behavior on her ability to teach. The participant said, “After the circle, the teacher shared a change in student behaviors for most of the class.”

I also asked participants to give details of a situation where restorative practices were not effective. Participants noted restorative practices were not effective when students were not ready to repair and were forced to interact too quickly, due to developmental concerns and when no preconferecing took place. Four participants referenced concerns relating to students struggling with emotional regulation; when a student’s health issues impacted their ability to restore the situation, especially when experiencing psychosis or needing medication management; and when students were emotionally or cognitively unavailable. Participants also discussed this concern at the beginning discussion of several JEPD course sessions.

***Peer observation reflections.*** As a part of the JEPD, each participant completed peer observations/feedback and self-evaluations. Participants discussed some observations in class whereas they entered others into SurveyMonkey. For each peer observation, I asked participants

to reflect on their feedback and interactions with students: participants uploaded 22 responses to SurveyMonkey. These responses included self-reflection (45%), observations by peers (14%), and reflection on learning by observing someone else (41%). After completing these tasks, I asked participants to read the part of Title's (2011) *5 R's of Restorative Practices* to help address areas of growth.

The data showed that two of the 5 R's—reintegration and repair—were areas of growth. No participant rated reintegration as a strength, and only 9% (two participants) saw repair as a strength. Reintegration was the area in which participants needed the most growth, with 86% of respondents indicating that need on the survey and 41% of participants indicating that repair was an area needed for growth. Of participants, 90% believed relationships are a strength, 54% thought respect was a strength, and 36% perceived responsibility was a strength.

**Summary.** First responders perceived effectiveness with use of restorative-practice techniques. Use of the 5 R's increased from pre- to postsurvey. Affective statements and questions and restorative language were used most effectively by first responders. Participants perceived they were somewhat effective in using proactive circles and responsive circles. Although no members indicated “not at all effective” in implementing restorative circles, the perceived effectiveness with this method was lowest. First responders perceived that their use of restorative practices has changed the atmosphere of the school and averred that they respond restoratively to discipline situations more than before JEPD.

Perceived effectiveness about the use of all 5 R's also increased. Participants perceived they most effectively implemented respect, responsibility, and relationships. They thought they used repair and reintegration less effectively than the other R's. Peer observations also indicated

that participants used respect and relationships frequently when responding to situations. They did not use repair and reintegration as frequently, nor were they a strength.

Participants shared instances when restorative practices were effective and times it was ineffective. Participants believed that restorative practices were effective when they conducted preconfereencing and when parents were involved in the discussion. They described situations when first responders observed that children's behavior had changed and noted a situation when a teacher shared that student behavior had changed.

When no one conducts preconfereencing, when conferencing was conducted before participants were ready, when students were developmentally challenged or in an emotional crisis, or when medication management was a concern, participants believed restorative responses were less effective. However, one participant noted that, "even if [restorative responses] did not work initially or weren't immediately effective, it laid the groundwork for students and in future situations-students were more able to participate."

### **First responders' perceptions of their abilities to teach/coach others.**

**Survey.** On the presurvey, 50% of the participants did not feel at all confident teaching/coaching others about restorative practices. On the midyear survey, all participants felt at least somewhat comfortable, with 25% (two participants) feeling very comfortable. On the postsurvey, 75% felt very comfortable whereas 25% felt somewhat comfortable. Based on the data, comfort in teaching and coaching others increased.

Participants' responses indicated an increase in frequency of coaching and teaching others about restorative practices. On the presurvey, 63% (five) indicated they do not coach/teach others about restorative practices at all, 25% (two) coach or teach others once a month, and 12% (one) coach or teach others once a week. On the midyear survey, all participants

indicated they coach/teach others at least once a week: 63% (five) indicated they coach/teach others once a week, and 37% (three) indicated they coach or teach others daily. On the postsurvey, I made an error in that the Likert scale was different; thus, I did not report results in these findings.

**Summary.** Confidence and frequency in teaching/coaching others about restorative practices increased. First responders ended the experience with a high level of comfort in teaching and coaching others in restorative practices. All first responders coached or taught others at least once a week.

### **Teachers' perceptions.**

**Survey.** I sent a survey to 34 certificated teachers working at the school between February and May. I sent the survey four times: in February, March, April, and May. All 34 of the teachers received the survey more than once because each teacher called for support at least once over the multiple months I sent the survey. I collected no identifying information from participants, and participants may have completed the survey twice in one month when reporting separate incidents that occurred. The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey, and I collected a small number: 13 responses. Because each of the certificated teachers received the survey at least twice, some of the 13 responses may have been from the same teacher. I received two responses in February, five in March, two in April and four in May.

When asked if teachers were active in creating the plan, 38% (five of thirteen) indicated they agreed, and 53% indicated that they disagreed (five) or strongly disagreed (two). When asked if the response/plan effectively addressed the issue, six of the thirteen teachers (46%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the response/plan effectively addresses the issue. Two (15%) of the participants agreed and five (39%) indicated they neither agreed, disagreed, nor indicated

not applicable. When asked if the situation was resolved and no further incidents occurred, 31% (four) agreed, and 63% (eight) indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if the worth of the child had been addressed 8% (one) strongly agreed, 46% (6) of the participants agreed, and 46% neither agreed nor disagreed instead indicated not applicable.

Eight participants provided comments/suggestions. I open coded these comments/suggestions using NVivo. The theme that emerged from these comments was teachers' desire to receive more communication regarding first responders' follow through. Teachers indicated a desire to understand what follow-through was done after students met with first responders.

***Researcher journal.*** First responders were the only group to receive ongoing training on restorative practices at the school. In May, a group of 16 staff members signed up for a book study using *Better than Carrots and Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management* in May and June that one of the therapists who was a part of this study and I conducted. Participants in the course attended six sessions and received 1 credit for certification. Participants shared they chose to participate because they knew first responders were using restorative-practice strategies to help lessen discipline concerns in the school. During the course, staff members mentioned they enjoyed the course and thought about discipline differently after the book study. One participant had used a restorative circle with the class, which had improved the behavior of a child who was having ongoing discipline issues. During the course, participants mentioned the importance of communicating what was happening when first responders met with students because teachers did not know or understand restorative practices yet. Teachers were excited to share this information with teachers the next year and asked to be a part of sharing this new information with others.

**Summary.** Most teachers who responded to the survey did not believe first responders' responses resolved situations, nor did they believe the plan that was created addressed the issue. Many also indicated they were not active participants in creating the plan. Teachers noted they desired more communication regarding first responders' follow through; more specifically, they wanted to know what follow-through had been performed. Teachers had little knowledge of restorative practices other than a 1-credit book study conducted at the end of the school year. During the book study, participants described the importance of sharing restorative-practice techniques with other teachers including the differences between punitive and restorative responses. Staff noted that communication and training about restorative strategies and philosophy would help teachers understand first responders' responses to behaviors.

**Impact of first responders' interactions with African American boys.** Based on data in the SWIS reporting system, educators made 137 student-discipline referrals in 2017–2018 and 120 major student-discipline referrals in 2018–2019. African American male referral data in both school years is disproportionate. African American boys received 62 of the 137 student-discipline referrals in the 2017–2018 school year and African American boys received 53 of the 120 student-discipline referrals in 2018–2019. In both school years, African American students comprised 16% of the school's total population yet received 45% of the total student-discipline referrals in 2018 and 44% in 2019. Although student-discipline referrals decreased by 17 student-discipline referrals between the two school years, African American boys continued to disproportionately receive a higher percentage of student-discipline referrals than Caucasian students. Referral data may be skewed as there was a new support team, secretary and support call system. Referrals have to be completed by teachers and inputted by the school office staff.

The overall number of suspensions issued by first responders from the specialized program and general-education program decreased as well. In 2018, of the 22 total suspensions, nine were African American boys. In 2019, the seven suspensions represented a decrease of 66%. Of those seven suspensions, five (71%) were African American boys. Because the school population comprises 16% African Americans, suspension data continue to be disproportionate.

Staff reviewed data on restraints and seclusions monthly in the specialized program. First responders initiate many restraints and seclusions, but not all. I collected restraint and seclusion data for the third and fourth quarters, spanning from January to the end of the school year. Restraint data decreased for the specialized program last year. In the 2nd and third quarters of 2018, educators restrained students 460 times: 252 in the third quarter and 208 in the fourth quarter, for an average of 19 restraints per student (24) in the program. In 2019, the number of restraints in third and fourth quarter decreased for a total of 327, averaging 13 per child (25). Seclusions in the specialized program dropped as well. In 2018, seclusions were 123 and in 2019, 106. General-education teachers rarely use restraint and seclusion; thus, I did not collect this data for this study. All student suspensions and restraints issued to African American students in this study were for African American boys.

I collected support-log data for general-education students this year, following my suggestion as the researcher and a supervisor. The data accrued from December to June. After review of this data monthly, the team realized some data input errors missed a support call or erred in recording student names or initials. The support team filled in missing data as they noticed it. The support log includes breaks, calls that were proactive and reactive, as well as support for students the staff member believed needed to receive support outside of the classroom. The support calls indicate times that first responders interacted with students. First



responders deemed some support calls to be referable offenses but most were not. The support log showed 1033 support calls in total, equating to about 148 support calls a month or about 8 support calls a day. Of students who received support calls, 60% were African American boys.

**Survey.** When coding answers on the postsurvey to share in what ways this JEPD had impacted their interactions with African Americans, three major themes emerged: help with all students, relationships, and mindful decisions. Some participants believed the JEPD helped them respond effectively with all students, thereby helping with African American students as well. One participant stated that, “I don’t personally feel as though I responded a specific or different way to African American students specifically. This course has impacted my interactions with all students.”

Participants mentioned that the JEPD helped them “be mindful of how to build and maintain relationships” and two mentioned gaining an understanding of “our implicit biases” in the responses. One participant wrote, “Understanding implicit bias is very meaningful. It is important to keep an understanding of development and interactions in a way that makes me think twice and better understand.” Educators made several references to the importance of first responders being reflective, mindful, and more aware of their interactions with African American students. Two participants also mentioned that understanding personal implicit biases was imperative and meaningful.

When asked if the implementation of restorative practices has impacted African American students’ discipline, 38% (three) answered a lot, 50% (four) answered somewhat and 13% (one) answered not at all. When asked if the implementation of restorative practices has impacted their responses to African American students 38% (three) answered A lot, 38% (three) answered somewhat, 13% (one) answered just a little and 13% (one) answered not at all.

**Summary.** Based on the referral data, first responders continue to issue a disproportionate number of suspensions to African American boys and teachers refer a disproportionate number for inappropriate behavior. The number of African American boys who were suspended decreased slightly, as did the overall numbers of referral and seclusions, but concerns persist about disproportionate discipline and a high level of restraints and seclusions used in the special program. First responders in the general-education program are also called to support staff and students. Though some of the calls are proactive as well as reactive, first responders are spending a large part of the day responding to calls from staff members to support students.

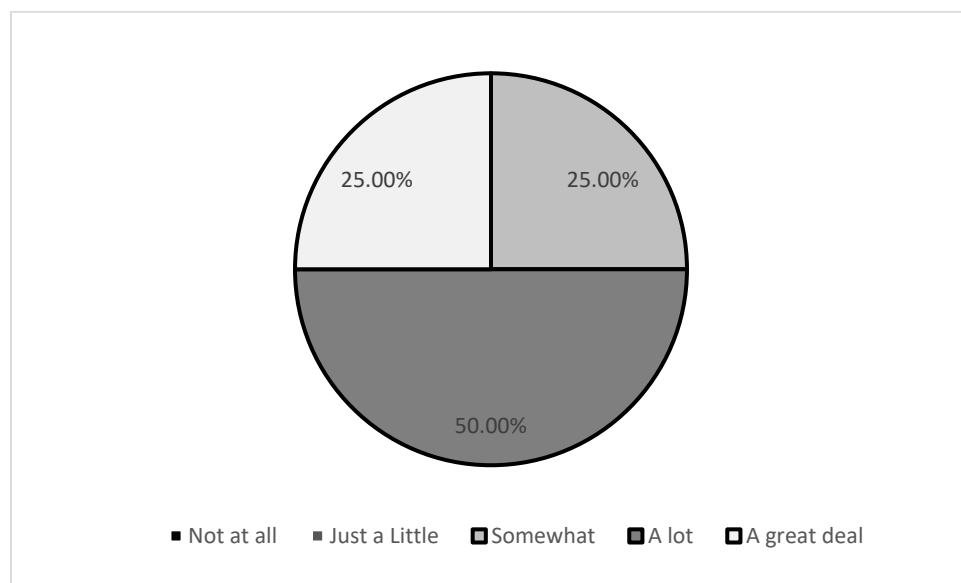
**Impact of the premises of change theory in JEPD.** I created the JEPD based on Fullan and Lewin's change theory. The connection of the theories appears in Figure 1. This research subquestion was not initially asked. After coding responses, themes emerged that correlated with these theories and the format of the JEPD.

In the postsurvey, I asked participants if they believed other schools should have this JEPD. Seven of the eight participants answered this question, agreeing that others should experience this format. The participant responses noted that the JEPD fostered relationships, promoted equity, provided a unified approach and message, allowed time to refine and analyze, and one participant said, "I think it is a great opportunity to meet, grow, and learn together." Another participant noted, "There is nothing more effective, in my opinion than receiving feedback in the moment following an interaction to truly refine, reflect and analyze your own response." Last, a participant noted, "I think giving staff time to reflect on best practices and current techniques is always beneficial."

In the postsurvey, I asked participants if the reflective journals changed their practice. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from not at all to a great deal, 25% (two) answered a

great deal, 50% (four) answered a lot, and 25% (two) answered somewhat (see Figure 15). In a reflection journal from the June 11th JEPD, one participant shared,

The reflection component that occurs throughout the class and the conversation that comes along with it has been incredibly engaging. This conversation allows us to problem solve for challenges present both within the building along with refining practices as additional challenges present themselves in the future. We don't only talk about strategies for students but also strategies to move the school forward has been extremely beneficial and causes me to reflect following each time, I am involved with a student incident.



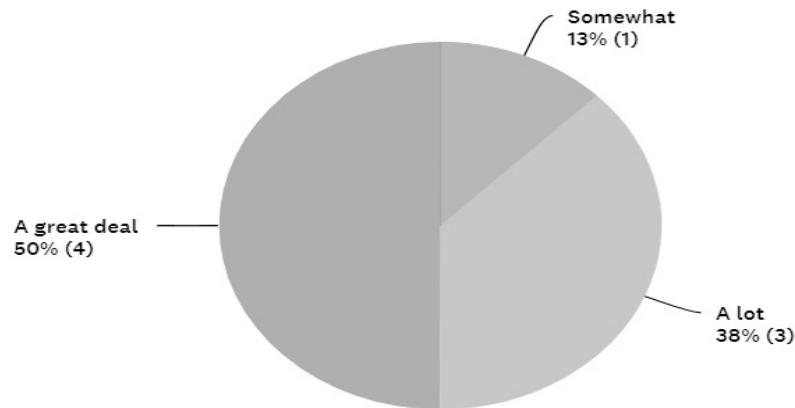
*Figure 15.* Reflection journals have changed their practice.

When I asked participants if this JEPD had changed their practice, 75% (six) participants answered a lot and 25% (two) indicated it had changed their practice a great deal. Also, 50% (four) indicated that analyzing the discipline data with their team changed their practice a great deal, 38% (three) indicated it changed their practice a lot, and 13% (one) indicated it changed their practice somewhat (see Figure 16).

In a reflective journal, one participant shared that,

I think that reviewing the data during this most recent class was helpful for me because

our restraint and seclusion numbers have decreased which makes me feel hopeful. I think continuing to model for staff and show them that they have other options prior to going hands on will continue to be beneficial for everyone.



*Figure 16.* Percentages of practice change.

**Summary.** I used Fullan's and Lewin's change theories to develop the JEPD. Participants indicated their responses to discipline calls have changed and that components of the class helped them change their interactions with students. In particular, they found ongoing reflection, the JEPD format, the data analysis, and feedback helpful. Overall, participants believed other schools should integrate this JEPD because it was beneficial, an opportunity to learn and grow, fostered relationships, and promoted equity.

### **Findings**

Based on the data, first responders reported that perceptions of their confidence and effectiveness in using restorative practices increased after participating in JEPD. First responders

reported they use the restorative strategies more than they did prior to JEPD. As restorative practices became more formal, participants had less confidence in using them and use them less. In contrast, they used less formal restorative practices like affective statements and restorative questions daily and weekly, after participating in the professional development. Time to implement the strategies effectively, time to preconference, and time to ensure all stakeholders are ready to participate in a restorative solution were noted as challenges for participants. The findings from this data analysis provide information that can be used to inform future actions and research.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS**

The primary purpose of this exploratory action-research study employing qualitative and quantitative data sources was to explore the impact of JEPD in restorative practices with first responders. I examined the beginning stages of implementation of JEPD on restorative practices in an elementary school as a strategy to address disproportionality in suspensions. Analysis used descriptive statistics of referral, suspension, support-call log, and restraint data; coding of reflective journals; coding of open-ended survey responses; and analysis of survey results using descriptive statistics. Study participants included an administrator, special-program coordinator, therapists, a guidance counselor, and student support/behavioral specialists in an elementary school (Pre-k–fifth grade) in a large Mid-Atlantic school system. These educators serve as the first responders to behavioral incidents/support calls from school staff.

Although this exploratory study did not achieve the goal of eliminating the disproportionate discipline of African American boys, several findings may be useful to address this concern. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings presented in Chapter 4. The analysis includes a discussion of the findings, the significance of those findings, bounds of the study, implications, suggestions for future research, and a final conclusion.

### **Discussion**

Key areas emerged from the data that inform the current status of the school in implementing JEPD on restorative practices and provide a roadmap for future practice and research. Three emerging threads of analysis are changes in first responders' actions, words, thinking, and knowledge from JEPD; feedback and results from the implementation of JEPD using the premises of change theory; and struggles associated with first responders "unfreezing

and changing” while implementing and learning about restorative practices in a nonrestorative school environment.

### **Changes in First Responders from JEPD**

I dubbed study participants, those who respond to discipline situations, first responders because the impact their decisions have on students is critical and impactful to the lives of students. First responders are critical decision makers. It is essential that they have adequate strategies and training to make appropriate decisions. Ironically, little or no training is available in discipline methods and responses to crisis or behavioral support for people who decide if students are suspended or expelled.

Analysis of survey results and coding of scenario responses and journals showed that JEPD positively impacted first responders in a number of ways. Those changes included knowledge, use, perceived effectiveness and perceived ability to teach/coach others about restorative-practice techniques and the five components of Title’s (2011) restorative justice framework. If the goal is to decrease the numbers of student discipline referrals, suspensions, restraints and other punitive methods of discipline, it is essential that the group of decision-makers who use these methods of discipline as consequences receive training on alternative strategies.

Although the disproportionate discipline impacting African American boys did not decrease in this study, the number of suspensions decreased by 66%. One less suspension is one less child who has missed days of school and instruction. Students should not miss instruction due to unjust or inappropriate punishment. The number of restraints, seclusions, and student-discipline referrals decreased very slightly overall.

Based on the data, first responders made gains in knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness with all five of the R's. A commensurate increase emerged in the frequency of use of all restorative techniques, especially the informal techniques of restorative rather than punitive language, using affective statements and questions. Participants used these informal techniques consistently. These important informal components of restorative practices are essential to developing relationships with students and decreasing further escalation of student incidents. JEPD led first responders to develop and implement strategies that helped them develop meaningful relationships, which is an essential component for appropriate, restorative discipline.

During the JEPD, the first responders unfroze, changing their thinking and actions to be more student-centered. One theme that emerged from coding the survey and reflection journals was that first responders started seeing students beyond their behavior. Participants showed evidence of unfreezing and changes in thinking focused on determining the message students were sending with their inappropriate behavior. This change in thinking led to problem-solving responses rather than a punitive response.

First responders learned from the JEPD the importance of resolving a problem by gathering stakeholders involved in a situation together to resolve the issue. This confluence of interested parties gives everyone a chance to be heard and an opportunity to determine what can be done to repair the harm that has occurred. Repair helps ensure the situation has been addressed, allows the person harmed and the person who did the harm to give their perspectives, and often helps resolve the root of the problem. Rather than only giving consequences for inappropriate behavior, the problem is addressed so that hopefully future problems do not occur between the students.



Enthusiasm about using the practices also grew from pre- to post-JEPD. Participants noted that the JEPD fostered relationships, promoted equity, provided a unified approach and message, and allowed time to refine and analyze. Participants indicated on the postsurvey that JEPD had changed their practices a great deal and that JEPD should be continued and expanded to other schools.

JEPD for first responders built a strong knowledge base of restorative practices on which they can build and deepen in future years. Because first responders' enthusiasm about using restorative practices has also increased, I hope that with continued training and feedback, use of all the practices and restorative techniques will continue to increase. Professional development for first responders unfroze their mindsets and changed their actions when dealing with students.

### **JEPD and Change Theory as a Framework for Training**

I used Fullan's (2006) and Lewin's (1947) change theories as the framework for JEPD for first responders. This framework helped produce first responders who are confident, reflective, data-driven coaches of restorative practices. Participants indicated on the postsurvey that participation in the JEPD changed their practices a great deal. Three major components of the model were deemed to impact first responders and help them unfreeze their thinking and change their mindset and actions. Those premises were learning in context, bias for reflective action, and capacity building focused on results.

**Learning in context.** Rather than a workshop format of learning, this training was intensive, on-going and connected in practice, as suggested by Garet et al. (2001). Learning in context underlies the JEPD format. Sessions allowed for discourse on scenarios and specific student situations that were currently occurring, and provided strategies that could be

implemented immediately. This JEPD format also allowed peers to observe and offer feedback to each other about how they, as first responders, were responding to support calls.

**Bias for reflective action.** A second premise that was effective was a “bias for reflective action. ... Unless teachers engage in critical reflection and ongoing discovery, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations” (p. 294). A reason for the reflective journals and allocating time for reflection was to develop reflection as a first-responder disposition. According to Larrivee (2000), “Journal writing is also a helpful tool for examining personal biases and prejudices that may unwittingly play out in interactions with students” (p. 298). When teachers develop the practice of self-reflection, they learn to slow their thinking and reasoning process to become more aware of how they perceive and react to students and to bring to the surface some of their unconscious ways of responding to students (Larrivee, 2000, p. 298). First responders make several decisions each day on how to respond when students are dysregulated or have made inappropriate choices. Implicit bias can influence decision-making if not acknowledged and reflected upon. These decisions, if laced with implicit bias, can lead to decisions such as extended suspension, leading students into the school-to-prison pipeline.

Reflection was a consistent component of the JEPD, viewed by participants as essential. First responders indicated that reflective journals helped change their practice. One participant shared,

The reflection component that occurs throughout the class and the conversation that comes along with it has been incredibly engaging. ... We don't only talk about strategies for students but also strategies to move the school forward as a whole has been extremely beneficial and causes me to reflect following each time I am involved with a student

incident.

This JEPD led to one participant creating a tool for staff in the specialized program to use after restraints or seclusions are used as a disciplinary measure. The staff member asked for assistance in providing a way for staff to reflect after using these extreme strategies for discipline. It was promising to see that one of the participants internalized the importance of reflection as a way to foster change in the culture of the specialized program at the school.

The JEPD encouraged reflective practice and data-driven decision-making. To eliminate the disproportionality that exists, I hoped that reflective data-driven practitioners would make sound discipline decisions with less implicit bias. Such an outcome would help decrease the discipline disproportionality that exists for African American students.

### **Challenges in Responding Restoratively in a Nonrestorative Culture**

Participants identified some challenges as part of this action research. Although the amount of discipline decreased slightly and suspensions decreased by 66%, the data continued to be disproportionate for African American students. According to Fronius et al. (2016), “Schools that decide to implement RJ face a number of challenges in development, implementation, and sustainability” (p. 31). Although first responders increased knowledge and use and were coaching and teaching others about restorative practices, they noted challenges noted that hindered implementation. These challenges included lack of knowledge and use of restorative practices by other staff members who are discipline decision-makers, lack of time to respond restoratively, and lack of implementation of two of the 5 R’s in Title’s (2011) restorative framework: repair and reintegration.

**Lack of knowledge and use.** During JEPD sessions, participants noted their frustration with staff’s lack of understanding of restorative practices. As with any new initiative,

implementation requires training, as well as staff commitment (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 31). With no staff training on restorative practices, the other decision-makers on the staff did not learn of the methods used by first responders. Decision-making in discipline has multiple levels. The classroom teachers make decisions about interactions in the classroom that may lead to a call for support and student-discipline referral. These decisions force first responders to make decisions about further discipline, which may include detention, restraints, seclusions, and suspensions. If all decision-makers are not operating with restorative thinking, challenges and barriers will occur and disproportionate discipline will continue.

Participants noted they frequently observed other staff members not trained in restorative practices using punitive methods that were inappropriate for students. Gonzalez (2012) wrote, “It has been consistently documented that punitive school discipline policies not only deprive students of educational opportunities, but fail to make schools safer places” (p. 282). Title (2011) said a restorative environment or an environment of care requires restorative language and the 5 R’s (p. 169). Punitive responses used by other staff members negate a restorative community and the restorative work of first responders. Participants also noted challenges when they tried to respond restoratively, as staff struggled with this approach to discipline. In the reflective journal, one participant noted, “Staff’s frustration level and tolerance with working with students have made some incidents challenging to restore and address with both parties.”

**Time as a barrier.** A barrier that emerged repeatedly during coding was time. Allocating time to gather all stakeholders to conduct formal restorative techniques or to repair and reintegrate the child were barriers. Participants indicated having a lot of knowledge about repair and reintegration and demonstrated knowledge of using repair in the response through the scenario. Though they have this knowledge, in the peer observation reflections and survey

results, participants did not view themselves as effective in implementing these strategies, and saw this as an area requiring growth and refinement.

Based on the data coded from the scenario, participants understood the importance of repairing the relationship between the victim and person who did the harm. Although they understood repair, according to the survey data, they did not implement this important part of the restorative framework as much as they would have liked, due to some barriers: adequate time to ensure the repair happened, lack of willingness of staff/students to repair the situation, and problems coordinating time for all parties to gather together.

Participants reported that allocating time for the repair and appropriate reintegration were challenging because sometimes stakeholders were not ready to address the situation at the same time, sometimes emotions were high, sometimes stakeholders were not ready to repair the situation even though students needed to return to class, and sometimes they had insufficient time to implement proactive and restorative circles and conferences. One participant noted, in the reflection journal, that a barrier to implementation of newly learned strategies was

Time and support of teachers and paraprofessionals when responding to a call.

Oftentimes, I have found that the student is ready to process through utilizing restorative practices and the language that accompanies it, however, the staff involved continue to be angry, not open to the conversation, and negative in their responses to the questions.

This same participant continued to share that time continues to be a barrier as it is difficult, especially when classroom teachers are involved, to find a way to repair that relationship and reintegrate the child. An educator is not always available to cover classrooms for this to occur.

Survey data, coding of the scenarios, and reflection journal data showed that participants did not implement proactive circles as often as restorative circles and did not use repair and

reintegration as often as the other three R's. Being proactive rather than reactive is always the objective. Due to responding to a large number of discipline support calls and the barrier of time, this proactive restorative piece did not occur.

Although first responders perceived that their use of restorative practices increased, the referral data and restraint/seclusion data did not improve significantly, teachers did not feel that incidents were handled appropriately, and teachers expressed the desire to receive more communication about discipline incidents. Though first responders had restorative knowledge, the staff who were working with students consistently did not. This caused concern and may have contributed to teachers' perceptions that first responders were not appropriately handling discipline situations. Having a nonrestorative environment and differing mindsets of staff may have contributed to differences in perception.

Repair and reintegration are essential parts of a restorative culture. Repair and responsibility are the R's that help resolve situations and reintegration is where transformation and new learning occur. When reintegration occurs, relationships, which are key to conflict prevention, have been restored (Title, 2011, p. 144). If repair and reintegration were not used consistently, responders could not maintain or develop important keys to prevention: relationships and respect. These did not occur as often or as effectively as participants desired, contributing to a lack of communication and understanding with teachers. Repair and reintegration are the R's that would be most visible to staff members as participants would most often use them to repair a situation and reintegrate the child. These R's make restorative practices different from other discipline responses. Because they were not used consistently, the school could not have cultivated a true restorative culture.

Having a restorative environment, where all decision-makers are operating under a restorative mindset and are receiving training specific to staff member's needs, may help reach the goal of eliminating the disproportionate data on African American boys. When all stakeholders are reflective and have a mindset that is restorative rather than punitive, an environment of listening, relationships, and problem-solving is likely to emerge and may result in fewer support calls and student-discipline referrals. Fewer support calls and student-discipline referrals would lessen the number of times first responders must make decisions that could lead to suspension and expulsions.

### **Significance of the Study**

This exploratory action research study explored the impact of JEPD on first responders and contributes to schools and school systems' understanding of the impact of JEPD in restorative practices by first responders. The study's significance evolved throughout the design and implementation. I categorize the significance of this study under five major areas: (a) The significance of the educational leader in disproportionate discipline, (b) Knowledge and application, (c) Practice and implementation, (d) Commitment to learning and growing as a professional, and (e) Mindset and culture's connection to disproportionality.

#### **The Significance of the Educational Leader in Disproportionate Discipline**

This study fills a gap in the existing body of research literature by focusing on first responders in school-based JEPD on restorative practices. Current researchers offered information about schoolwide implementation or professional development, often with a consulting company, leading to the implementation of restorative practices with no specific training for leaders and ultimate decision-makers regarding consequences. This study highlights the importance of first responders (administrators, coordinators, behavioral specialists, and

counselors) as discipline decision-makers. First responders make critical and impactful decisions regarding suspensions and expulsions. Because this group of professionals makes the final decision regarding suspensions, restraints, seclusion, and expulsions, it is imperative that they receive specific, ongoing training. This research provides some suggestions on how to unfreeze first responders' thinking and develop a change in actions and mindset on discipline. It is imperative that schools specifically consider these important stakeholders when developing plans to address discipline disproportionality.

### **Knowledge and Application**

I developed a training program and tools that can be used by other schools or school systems. These tools include surveys, a JEPD syllabus grounded in change theory and restorative-justice theory, tools and activities that encourage self-reflection of current practices, course materials, and an example of a format for implementing ongoing JEPD for first responders. These tools form a beginning set of strategies that can be used to develop knowledgeable first responders.

### **Practice and Implementation**

This study also provides considerations for practice and implementation. One consideration is that while providing JEPD for first responders, it is important to ensure that other discipline decision-makers in the school have a background in the methods being used. Also, it is important to ensure strategies and training are in place such that proactive restorative practices are part of the school culture. Training on proactive and visible measures such as proactive circles, repair, and reintegration are vitally important. A guide on implementation of JEPD for first responders appears on page 128 of this study.



This study provides some direction for colleges when deciding necessary coursework for education leaders. All education leaders need training specifically on how to effectively work with children when discipline concerns arise. Providing opportunities to read books and articles on this topic, shadowing current administrators and reflecting on responses to discipline, developing awareness of their implicit bias and how it can impact discipline decisions, and helping them realize how important they are as decision-makers are all crucial lessons for our next generation of leaders. Starting training on how to effectively work with students in discipline situations should begin in colleges and preparatory programs.

In addition, this work highlights the necessity to find solutions for the disproportionality that exists for African American boys. Throughout the nation and in this study, African American boys receive more exclusive and frequent discipline. First responders make the decisions to suspend and expel students. It is essential that school districts train leaders and equip them with strategies, such as restorative practices, to help address this disproportionality.

This information can also help schools and school systems, elementary and secondary, when conducting a cost–benefit analysis to determine if fiscal resources and time should be devoted to JEPD for first responders. Providing this training with a few trained people in the school system for the different groups of first responders may be a more cost-efficient way to provide necessary strategies and support to schools. Union officials may also want to consider developing a group of trained facilitators to provide JEPD for first responders to their constituents.

### **Commitment to Learning and Growing as a Professional**

All eight first responders agreed to be a part of the study and all eight participated in the study from start to finish. All first responders assessed the format and information to be helpful

and useful for their current role and believed that other groups of first responders should receive the same training in this format. Because this was an action-research study, I was able to adjust the JEPD course content, based on feedback from participants. Ensuring the content was seen as necessary by participants, I used their feedback to create the course agendas, which may have helped gain their commitment.

The range of time for this study was December to June and participants had to complete 45 hours of work to receive credit. All participants met the requirements and received credit. Most participants came to every face-to-face course session and participants who missed a session only missed one. When they missed a session, they completed coursework and assignments in a timely manner. This study presents a format of training that could be replicated by other schools, elementary and secondary, which may foster commitment to learning and growing as a professional.

### **Mindset and Culture's Connection to Disproportionality**

Despite the training, changes in use, knowledge, and action of the first responders, disproportionality persisted. This exploratory study provided insight, in a short time period, about the impact of JEPD on first responders. During this study, the importance of a restorative culture, where all decision-makers are operating under the same philosophy, emerged as a consideration. Title (2011) shared the importance of all the R's to establish a restorative culture. It is important that all of the R's are performed consistently; without one of them, the context of care is broken. Repair and Reintegration, the two R's that help to resolve and transform the conflict. To establish a restorative environment, these two R's should be implemented consistently.

This study highlights the importance of mindset and culture when making a change. As Lewin (1947) informed, a shift in thinking must exist for change to occur. This study highlighted the necessity for further exploration of the impact of implicit bias and culture when making a change.

### **Bounds of the Study**

This exploratory action-research study is just the beginning of research on an important topic. During this study, I developed a new program and implemented it with a group of eight first responders who were relatively new to the school. The sample size was small because the group was specifically selected as participants in the study. Five of the eight first responders were new to the school in the current year. This may have had a positive impact, as they were entering a new position and may have needed less emotional incitement to unfreeze their thinking. In contrast, this may have been a bound, as they were establishing relationships with teachers, students, and staff; trust and relationships are an essential part of implementing change.

The sample size for this study was small and all participants work in one school. Also, because the first responders had not established relationships with staff members, it was harder for them to coach and teach others. It can take time to develop strong relationships with students. Conducting another study with a larger sample size and greater diversity may yield different results and could provide additional helpful information.

Conducting a more longitudinal study over the course of 3 to 5 years would allow for further analysis of trends and information about the long-term impact of the JEPD for first responders. Having a longer time period for the JEPD would have allowed time to work with first responders to develop strategies to ensure they integrated the tenets of repair and

reintegration, and would have allowed more opportunity for coaching and teaching by the first responders with other decision-makers.

Because this study focused on first responders, only the first responders received training on restorative practices; thus, other staff members had little or no understanding of a restorative rather than punitive style of discipline. Because many teachers operate on the customary punitive responses to discipline, introducing restorative discipline without training may have impacted the results. Because teachers' perceptions and first responders' perceptions differed, it may be worthwhile to explore whether training first responders and teachers at the same time would yield different results. Including the most important stakeholder, the students, in the study would provide valuable information to further evaluate the impact of the JEPD. Collecting the perspective of the students directly after any restorative solution and then again at a future date (e.g., a month later) would help determine from the child's perspective if the restorative response helped with the situation.

The initial plan was for me to provide feedback monthly to the first responders using the observational checklist provided. I found that trying to schedule observations of discipline observations was not plausible due to the unexpected nature of discipline situations in the school. With the responsibility of my role and the extended time to be available to observe and provide feedback to each participant, I did not observe as planned. To ensure I could offer ongoing feedback, I built peer feedback and reflection into the course. Because participants were growing in their understanding of restorative practices, the feedback varied.

Having a consistent outside observer trained in JEPD and restorative practices observe first responders' responses may have provided helpful feedback to first responders. Such an observer could confirm if first responders' perceptions of the use and effectiveness of restorative

practices was accurate, or if teachers' perceptions were correct. These data could also be used to determine if first responders were increasing their use of restorative practices.

Teachers' perspectives were quite limited, as a small portion of teachers who received the survey responded. Staff who were disgruntled may have been those who answered, whereas staff who were pleased with the outcome may not have answered. Without focus groups and more information from teachers, the survey data are hard to interpret. Having focus groups would have allowed for more data to determine if a disconnection occurred in philosophy (restorative vs. punitive discipline).

Staff members who performed data collection for the restraints, student-discipline referrals, support calls, and seclusions had multiple tasks to complete in a day. Some data may have been skewed, missing, or added, due to the multiple tasks each person responsible for inputting data may have needed to do and human error. The support-call log used by first responders to help lead discussions about students should have had more automatic formulas, which could decrease entry and calculation errors. Also, having the data already compiled rather than having first responders calculate the information would allow first responders to spend their time analyzing the data and discussing next steps during JEPD course sessions, which may have led to deeper insights and conversations among the team.

### **Implications**

Three key areas emerged from the data that inform the school's current progress in implementation and provide a roadmap for future practice and research: changes in first responders, barriers when a restorative culture does not exist, and the impact of JEPD coupled with change theory.

## **Changes to First Responders**

Based on the data, participants perceived the JEPD to be beneficial and thought this training should be given to all teams of first responders. They also suggested the JEPD be continued with the current school team. All first responders should receive training focusing on discipline. Based on the data in this study, the impact of JEPD for first responders

- increased enthusiasm about using restorative practices.
- initiated a change in first responders' responses to discipline because of the ongoing reflection and job-embedded format.
- increased use, confidence, and highly perceived effectiveness of restorative language, which includes restorative questions and affective statements.
- increased use, confidence, and perceived effectiveness of restorative actions, which include responsive circles, proactive circles, and restorative conferences.
- increased use and perceived effectiveness of integrating the 5 R's of relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration.
- increased confidence and frequency in teaching and coaching about behavioral strategies/restorative practices.
- slightly decreased the number of student-discipline referrals, restraints, and seclusions from the previous year.

JEPD, coupled with change theory, was an effective way to promote change for first responders. Lewin's change theory advised that in order for change to be effective people who are involved must embrace it and provide assistance with putting it in place (1947). JEPD for first responders did just this. The data demonstrated that JEPD led to unfreezing of first responders' thinking and changes to their actions and reactions when disciplining students.

With JEPD, data-driven, reflective, responsive, and knowledgeable practitioners who can coach and train others in restorative practices can develop. These practitioners can help respond restoratively and can help all decision-makers in the school think restoratively rather than punitively. Though first responders did not yet perceive themselves as highly effective with the practices, they indicated the importance of all restorative practices being used with students and indicated a desire to improve in using all practices well and on a consistent basis.

Training about discipline procedures is essential and should begin in college preparatory programs. Providing time for reflection, practice with data analysis and creating action plans, discussions about ways to address discipline situations, and training on restorative practices should be part of college and preparatory programs for any first responder. That is, “student-centric, outlining foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders so they can move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 1) are called Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. JEPD in restorative practices for first responders directly addresses five of the 10 standards that are essential principles of leadership: Standard 2—Ethics and Professional Norms, Standard 3—Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, Standard 5—Community of Care and Support for Students, Standard 6—Professional Capacity of School Personnel, and Standard 7—Professional Community for Teachers and Staff. JEPD in restorative practices aligns with these standards, helping to increase the effectiveness of school leaders.

### **Barriers When a Restorative Culture Does Not Exist**

It is essential, in implementing change to a restorative environment, that all decision-makers in the school have been trained. Without a restorative environment, schools lack knowledge of the practices, lack use of restorative practices by other staff members, lack time to

respond restoratively, and lack implementation of two of the 5 R's in Title's (2011) restorative framework: repair and reintegration.

To eliminate barriers impeding first responders' use of restorative practices, it is important to develop a restorative culture. Ensuring all staff members receive training on restorative practices and techniques may eliminate barriers and improve communication. Whole-school training in addition to specifically training first responders would ensure staff share a common understanding of restorative practices when addressing incidents and may lead to fewer incidents overall.

When school-wide prevention practices are in place, there is a sense of trust in a school, and difficulties can be more easily dealt with through methods that do not punish or exclude students from the learning environment. ... When attention is given to the whole population through school-wide prevention practices and restorative practices are used to manage difficulties, there will be fewer students in crisis who require intense intervention. (Kidd & Alfred, 2011, p. 12)

Whole-school training along with specific training for first responders may lead to a more restorative environment.

Teachers who completed the survey expressed concern with communication on discipline. Teachers and the first responders noted they did not implement two of the 5 R's—repair and reintegration—as effectively as the other R's. Further, they did not use the restorative technique of proactive circles daily or as frequently as they would have liked. These restorative practices and techniques are visible, involve staff members, and help provide clarity and understanding of how they handle discipline situations. Increasing the use of these strategies may



have helped staff who were not trained to see restorative practices in action, and would have ensured better communication.

Also, if first responders use repair, reintegration, and proactive circles with teachers and students, coaching and modeling of restorative language and thinking will occur because staff members will hear restorative language and will help develop a restorative culture. Based on the data, first responders believed they were knowledgeable about how to repair and reintegrate students, yet frequency of use was lower than in other areas. Incorporating techniques, methods and ways to strategically plan for reintegration and repair to happen may be a consideration when planning JEPD.

First responders were concerned about finding the time to fully handle situations in a restorative way. Kidde and Alfred (2011) said, “When the whole school is infused with restorative principles it becomes easier to address issues faster and respond in a deeper way because the caring and supportive culture is already present” (p. 12) Having the entire school trained on the principles may lessen the number of support calls and allow for more proactive measures to occur. Allowing time during the JEPD and providing time for reflection on how to provide more proactive responses may help increase the restorative environment overall.

### **The Impact of JEPD Coupled With Change Theory**

First responders receive little or no training on how to discipline students, yet it is a part of their daily role. The format of professional development should not be the traditional “sit and get” but rather intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice (Garet et al., 2001). A job-embedded approach allows participants to reflect, have discourse with other professionals while changing participants’ mindsets, receive direct instruction and advice from other first responders on situations they are handling at the time, and allows for analysis and strategic use of data.

Providing ongoing JEPD helps solidify changes in practice so change and Lewin's (1947) refreeze can occur. Having ongoing JEPD focused on a topic also sets clear outcomes and establishes permanency of this change, supported by Lewin's change theory.

Providing the JEPD in a group format and allowing participants freedom to use restorative practices as they saw fit may have contributed to some positive impacts. All group participants committed to learning about restorative practices and ended the JEPD being enthusiastic about using the techniques and practices. Although the desired result of the elimination of disproportionate discipline of African American students did not occur, I hope that, with continued training of the entire staff and continued JEPD for first responders specifically in repair, reintegration, and proactive circles, the disproportionality of discipline data will decrease. During the JEPD, data showed that participants' thinking unfroze, changed, and refroze at different levels and in different areas for each participant. Increased confidence in integrating the 5 R's, using the practices, and coaching and teaching by first responders may show progress toward the desired results.

Providing ongoing JEPD in restorative practices incorporating Title's (2011) 5 R's and the five informal and formal restorative-practice techniques had a positive impact on first responders. Planners of this JEPD may want to include focused and ongoing discussion on using and scheduling proactive circles, repair, and reintegration. Repair and reintegration include all stakeholders and may help increase the communication teachers were requesting. These two R's are also important components of full implementation of restorative discipline. Proactive circles can also be used to help teach students important skills and build the relationships and respect necessary to have a restorative environment.

Reflection was an important component of the JEPD because, “People not only gain understanding through reflection, they evaluate and alter their own thinking” (Freeman, Mahoney, Devitto, & Martini, 2004, p. 40). By encouraging reflection, the desired effect is that staff will develop reflection as a professional disposition. Ensuring time to develop first responders as reflective practitioners is important because

When teachers develop the practice of self-reflection, they learn to (1) slow down their thinking and reasoning process to become more aware of how they perceive and react to students and to (2) bring to the surface some of their unconscious ways of responding to students. (Larrivee, 2000, p. 298)

First responders knowing their biases and becoming aware of their perceptions and reactions to students may help first responders make decisions that eliminate the disproportionality in discipline that exists (see Table 8).

Table 8

*JEPD Course Connection to Change Theory*

<b>Focus on Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity: reading and learning new strategies</li> <li>• Received books that could be kept</li> <li>• Resources-Links to resources to use for reference and to coach others</li> <li>• Leadership support- Supervisors present at sessions</li> <li>• Time for collaboration with peers regarding implementation</li> <li>• Credit for JEPD (Course)</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity-Building Focused on Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis and goal-setting each class</li> <li>• Focused on increasing participants use of restorative practices as a discipline strategy</li> <li>• Clearly established goal with permanency: Eliminate the gap</li> </ul>
<b>Learning in Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job-embedded- shortly after interactions with students and away from students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ monthly face-to-face/online sessions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Job-embedded- nearly real-time and away from students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Informal observations followed with a feedback discussion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Changing Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants from General Education and Specialized Special Education program</li> <li>• Varying roles including administration/ coordinators/ therapists/ guidance/behavioral support teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Bias for Reflective Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection built into every on-line, face-to face and on-line/face-to-face course</li> <li>• After reflection, time for discussion about what they are experiencing: positive and concerns</li> </ul>
<b>Tri-Level Engagement</b>	Support and promotion of the use of restorative practices by supervisors, school staff members, Union Officials, and Associate Superintendent
<b>Persistence and Flexibility-Stay the Course</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going, monthly course with feedback</li> <li>• Encouraged to try things and bring back to class to discuss</li> <li>• Successes and struggles shared at the start of each class</li> </ul>

Based on these findings, if a school or school system were to implement JEPD for first responders, I have several considerations. Using change theory and JEPD as the basis for the implementation would be essential. All the premises of the change theory should be considered and infused in some way. Below, I provide an implementation guideline based on the findings

from this study. The premises of the change theories are in parentheses beside each recommendation.

1. Develop a course or use an established course for first responders and other staff members to receive credit for participation. (Motivation)
2. Ensure that school leadership—principals and assistant principals—are devoted to making the change to restorative discipline. (Tri-level engagement)
3. Develop emotional incitement, helping staff recognize the need for change. (Unfreeze)
  - a. Show data frequently and discuss disproportionality in your school to build a compelling reason to participate.
  - b. Tell stories of students and relate how disproportionate data impacts your students.
  - c. Provide articles, books, studies to staff about JEPD and restorative practices.
  - d. Get trilevel engagement by supporting this initiative by others (superintendent, union, leaders in the building).
  - e. Communicate the objective of the JEPD and establish permanency (this will be a schoolwide expectation in the future).
4. Set an implementation plan. (Persistence and flexibility—Stay the course)
  - a. Plan and schedule a set of ongoing (at least monthly) JEPD sessions for first responders for at least 7 months; consider the entire school year.
  - b. Plan and schedule an ongoing book study/class on restorative practices for staff members.
5. Develop a data-monitoring system. (Capacity building focused on results)

- a. Determine what data will be analyzed.
  - b. Determine how the data will be collected and checked for accuracy.
  - c. Develop ways for data to be compiled and organized so first responders can analyze and develop plans.
6. Develop JEPD that includes the premises of change theory: Reflection is an essential part. (Bias for reflective action/Learning in context/Capacity building/Change)
  - a. Provide time to plan for when proactive circles are to occur.
  - b. Provide opportunities to role play restorative conferences, restorative circles, and proactive circles.
  - c. When reviewing data, discuss how many situations the visible R's of repair and reintegration were implemented; consider setting goals for how many responses emerge.
7. Provide opportunities for peer observation and outside observation and feedback for first responders with using restorative practices. Ensure reflection is done after participants receive observational feedback. (Learning in context)
8. Develop a plan to get feedback from students after they are part of restorative-discipline measures.
9. Develop a plan for implementation and continued use of the practices.  
(Change/Refreeze/Persist/Flexibility—Stay the course)

As this exploratory study spanned less than a school year, this study shows the results of a short-term, introductory intervention to reduce disproportionality. Based on the results of this study, my theoretical framework would change. I would add the importance of the restorative environment and an increased focus on repair and reintegration during JEPD. The conceptual

framework would look the same, with the addition of the importance of the restorative environment where all decision-makers are knowledgeable and operating under a restorative framework. In Figure 17, bolded words emphasize the importance of focusing on repair and reintegration during the JEPD.

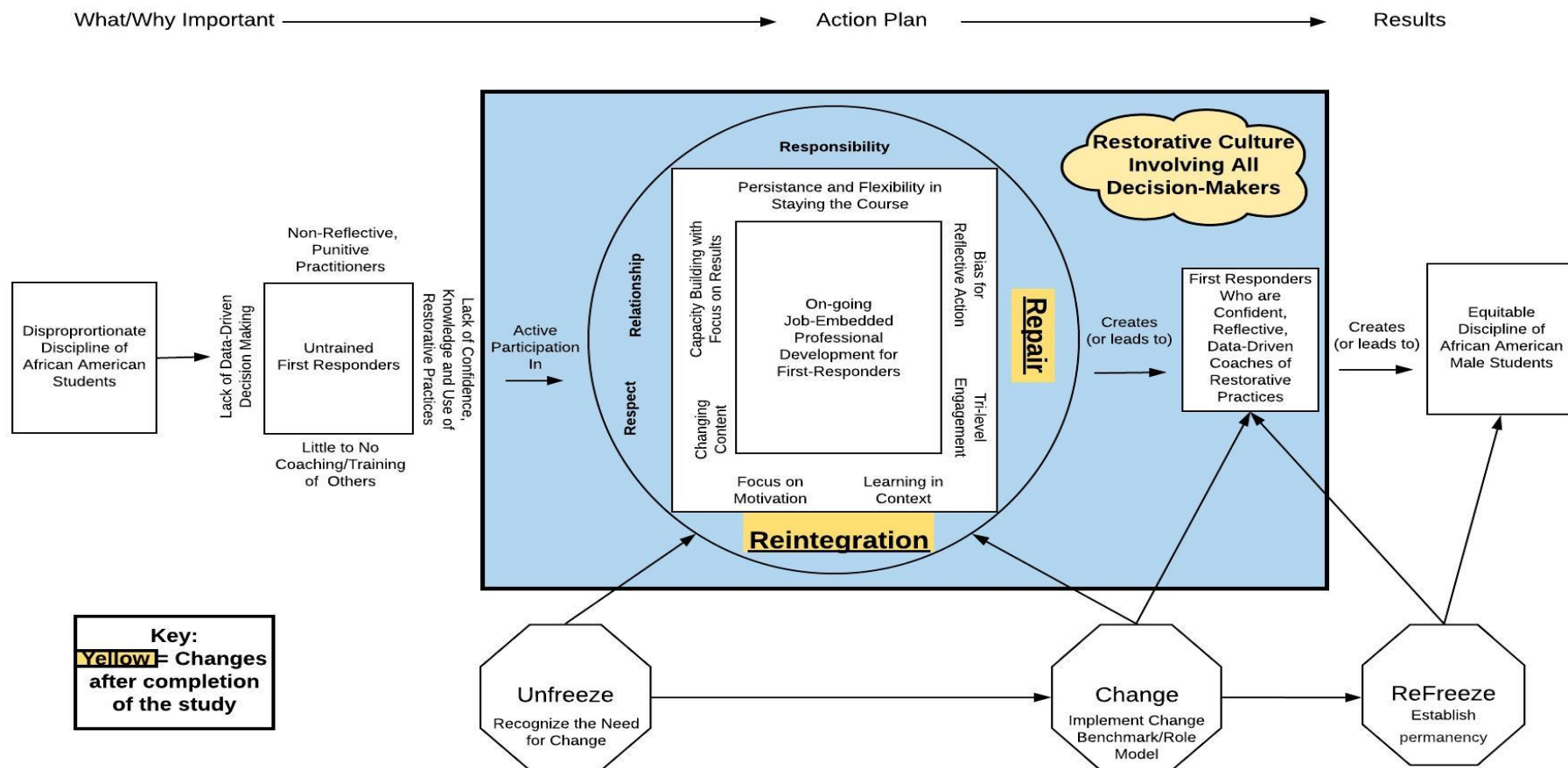


Figure 17. Change in conceptual framework emphasis.



### **Suggestions for Future Research:**

Three key areas emerged from the data that inform the school's current progress in implementation and provide a roadmap for future practice and research: changes in first responders, barriers associated when a restorative culture does not exist, and the impact of JEPD coupled with change theory. Suggestions for future research can expand on these three areas.

#### **Changes in First Responders**

Further research could explore the impact of JEPD on first responders with a larger and diverse sample. Studying a larger sample and including participants from rural, suburban, and urban school settings may provide different findings. Also expanding the study to last 3 to 5 years would allow a researcher to explore the long-term impact of JEPD on disproportionate discipline data.

Another suggestion for future research is to collect data that examined the impact in use, effectiveness, and ability to coach and teach others from the perspectives of students, staff, and first responders. Holding focus groups with all stakeholders and adding the student perspective could yield interesting results and information not gathered in this study.

Also, replicating this study with an outside observer who gave ongoing feedback to first responders about their use, knowledge, and ability to coach others would offer another consistent data source to determine if first responders' perceptions are in line with their actions. Analyzing specific first responders and specific changes regarding language, actions, beliefs, mindset, and implicit bias could also provide specificity to the benefit of JEPD for first responders. Having an outside observer, recording and analyzing discipline responses and talking with participants to gather their thoughts after several discipline determinations would yield valuable data that could inform future JEPD and work to decrease implicit bias in response calls.

## **Barriers When a Restorative Culture Does Not Exist**

Further research in a school with an already trained staff in restorative practices and added JEPD for first responders is another suggested research study. Knowledge from such a study would help determine if JEPD for first responders is useful, even when all staff members have been trained and are using restorative practices.

## **The Impact of JEPD Coupled with Change Theory**

One expansion to this current research would be investigating the importance of spending quality time in training discussing repair, reintegration, and proactive circles. These techniques and practices are those visible to the staff and the two that help resolve and transform situations. A focus of research could be investigating the impact on discipline data with a focus on these measures.

Also, a study focused on first responders' reflections on their possible implicit biases when responding to discipline calls while using the 5 R's may yield insight on the impact of reflection on decreasing disproportionate discipline. Providing several opportunities for reflection during JEPD may help provide insight into how implicit bias impacts discipline responses. Further, such a study might reveal how reflection impacts implicit bias when making discipline decisions.

## **Conclusion**

First responders are the ultimate decision-makers for school discipline. These school administrators, instructional assistants, therapists, behavior specialists, and counselors determine the consequences associated with inappropriate actions at schools. It is imperative that these stakeholders, who are critical to the lives of our students, are reflective, strategic decision-makers who make decisions in the best interest of students. Across the nation, African American

students are disproportionately disciplined, unjustly leading those students to the school-to-prison pipeline. “The over-representation of African American students in discipline has been documented extensively for nearly 40 years, and continues to increase” (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 557).

One strategy to address this disproportionality is JEPD in restorative practices for first responders. JEPD allows first responders to reflect on their practice, learn new strategies from the facilitator and other first responders, analyze data so strategic, data-driven decision-making can occur, and receive immediate feedback or soon after intervening with a student. Restorative practices comprise a strategy used effectively in schools across the nation. Implementing these practices requires a mind shift that occurs over time. Although restorative practices are not a quick fix to school discipline or disproportionality, they do provide a strategy to consider to address discipline concerns and discipline disproportionality.

Providing JEPD in restorative practices for this critical group of decision makers in a restorative environment is an action that may eventually help address the disproportionate discipline that happens across the country. In the words of Maya Angelou, Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better. With JEPD in restorative practices, first responders will “know better” as they are learning, reflecting, discussing, observing, and experimenting with their new learning. JEPD in restorative practices helps first responders “know better” so that they can in turn “do better” with students. It is essential to provide the tools and strategies so first responders can help to right the injustice occurring in schools.

## **EPILOGUE**

The results of this study were used to guide decisions for the next (2019-2020) school year. Decisions based on the results led to adjustments to the school improvement plan, the focus of professional development, data tracking, communication between first responders and other school staff regarding support calls, and focus for first responders.

The school improvement team which includes a representative sample of classroom teachers, school content specialists made the decision to include training and implementation of restorative practices into the school improvement plan. After analyzing the school's discipline data, the team felt that the implementation of restorative practices was an effective strategy to address the disproportionate discipline data. The team felt that job-embedded professional development in restorative practices would begin to create a restorative environment in the school. The job-embedded professional development would be done for all classroom teachers and support staff who work with students. The focus of the training was deemed to: develop an understanding of restorative practices and a restorative environment, explain why the practices and restorative environment are important, explore how a restorative environment contributes to a safe and orderly environment, and provide strategies for staff to implement restorative practices effectively. The focus of the training was proactive restorative practices which are affective statements, affective questions, and proactive circles.

Changes were made to ensure accuracy and consistency of data tracking. Support call data-tracking was started from the beginning of the school year. The format of the data chart was adjusted to ensure accurate spelling of students' names for more accurate data tracking and analysis. To help ensure more consistent and accurate data tracking by support personnel, an explanation of how this data are used was done with staff who inputted data for support calls. An

additional staff member was also designated to review the data tracking daily to ensure that all support calls were inputted accurately.

To increase communication of how discipline situations are handled, forms were developed by a representative sample of first responders, classroom teachers and support staff. These forms were 2-part, carbonless forms so that information could easily be written and returned to staff members. When staff members made support calls, these forms were to be completed so first responders could know why there was a support call without conversation with the staff member. After the situation was handled, the first responder was expected to return a page of the two-part form to the staff member who made the support call. The second page of the form was reviewed to ensure information about the support call was accurately recorded on the data-tracking sheet. This action research study provided information that could be used immediately to inform decisions for the next school year.

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## APPENDIX A: SCENARIOS

A fifth grader who just moved to the school this year is being bullied and harassed by a fifth grader from his neighborhood. He has been called names and the older boy has used lewd hand gestures to taunt him. He can't sit in the cafeteria at lunch or wait in line for the bus without being taunted by the older boy. He won't use the restroom at school unless he absolutely has to, and then he tried to make sure a teacher is nearby. No one wants to sit with him anymore because whoever is with him is subject to the same abuse. Although teachers have seen it once or twice and intervened, most of the harassment is when teachers aren't able to see.

from Conferences Trainer's Guide Practice Conference Scenarios

## APPENDIX B: ALIGNMENT OF JOURNAL PROMPTS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions	Reflective journal prompts/assignment
a. How does job-embedded professional development affect workshop participants' perceptions of their knowledge of restorative practices?	<p><b>Beginning of each class:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What barriers/challenges have you encountered associated with successful implementation of restorative practices?</li> <li>2. Since last class, if you have one, describe an effective response to a discipline call with a child that was done differently because of strategies learned in this class. How was your response different than you may have done before this class?</li> <li>3. Review the information presented during the last class or in one of the previous classes. Did any of the information covered in the last class or in one of the previous classes cause you to change your practice? If yes, in what way? If no, then what topics, materials, etc. would have been helpful?</li> <li>4. In what way did the material cause you to change your practice?</li> </ol> <p><b>End of each class:</b></p>
b. How does job-embedded professional development affect the first responder's use of restorative practices?	<p>What information will you be able to use and how do you see yourself using it in the future? Comments/ Suggestions/ Considerations for upcoming classes</p>

## APPENDIX C: INFORMAL OBSERVATION FORM

Reflection Questions for each support call/ Informal Observation Form	Observable Evidence	Completely Evident, Somewhat evident, Partially evident, Not Evident	Action Plan
<b>Relationship:</b>			
While the harm was addressed, the worth of the children was addressed.			
While the harm was addressed, the relationship among involved parties was preserved.			
The response included all impacted/relevant stakeholders.			
<b>Respect:</b>			
All stakeholders had a chance to speak and active listening occurred.			
Everyone involved was ready to address the issue.			
<b>Responsibility</b>			
All stakeholders, including adults, took responsibility for any part they may have had in what went wrong.			
The child who caused the harm demonstrated an understanding of the harm that he/she caused.			
An explanation of the school values associated with this event were explained.			
<b>Repair</b>			
A clear, appropriate restorative plan and formalized agreement was created.			
The student harmed and the student causing harm had the opportunity to hear the impact of the harm on all involved.			
All participants had an equal voice in expressing what each person needs from a plan.			
Both the person harmed and the person causing harm had an equal voicing in creating a plan for repair.			

Reflection Questions for each support call/ Informal Observation Form	Observable Evidence	Completely Evident, Somewhat evident, Partially evident, Not Evident	Action Plan
<b>Reintegration</b>			
The child that did the harm back was reintegrated back into the learning environment.			
The situation was resolved—no further incidents			
If the environment was harmed, the harm was addressed.			
The child that did the harm back was reintegrated back into the learning environment.			
The situation was resolved—no further incidents			
If the environment was harmed, the harm was addressed.			
The goals of the plan have been achieved.			
The conference/circle/plan/ response helped the student(s) be more successful at school.			
This response/plan effectively addressed the issue.			

## **APPENDIX D: TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS**

### **Relationship:**

The worth of the children was addressed.

The relationship between the students involved in the incident have become stronger.

The relationship between the student(s) and you have become stronger.

I was an active participant in creating the plan.

### **Respect:**

All stakeholders had a chance to speak and active listening occurred.

Everyone involved was ready to address the issue.

### **Responsibility**

All stakeholders, including adults, took responsibility for any part they may have had in what went wrong.

The child who caused the harm demonstrated an understanding of the harm that he/she caused.

Staff followed up and monitored the plan.

The students have been doing their part of the plan.

Students understood the connection with the school values associated with this event.

### **Repair**

A clear, appropriate restorative plan and formalized agreement was created.

The student harmed and the student causing harm had the opportunity to hear the impact of the harm on all involved.

All participants had an equal voice in expressing what each person needs from a plan.

Both the person harmed and the person causing harm had an equal voicing in creating a plan for repair.

The conference or circle helped fix the harm that was done.

The agreement will prevent the problem from reoccurring.

### **Reintegration**

The child that did the harm back was reintegrated back into the learning environment.

The situation was resolved—no further incidents

If the environment was harmed, the harm was addressed.

The goals of the plan have been achieved.

The conference/circle/plan/ response helped the student(s) be more successful at school.

This response/plan effectively addressed the issue.

## APPENDIX E: ALIGNMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

Research questions	Survey questions not at all just a little/ somewhat/a lot/a great deal
To what extent and in what ways does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices impact first responders?	
<b>a. How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders' knowledge of restorative practices?</b>	Presently, I understand the following concepts that will be explored in this class. Rate your knowledge of each restorative technique: Affective statements/Restorative questions/ Proactive circles/ Responsive circles/ Restorative meetings/Conferences. Rating system: not at all/just a little/somewhat/ a lot/a great deal –Question #1
	Presently, I understand the relationship between these techniques. Question #5
	What do you expect to understand at the end of the class that you do not know now?
	Presently, I am enthusiastic about restorative practices. Question #6
	Presently, I am confident that I understand restorative practices. Question #7
<b>b. How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders' frequency of use of restorative practices?</b>	Presently, I use the following: Affective statements/Restorative questions/Proactive circles/ Responsive circles/ Restorative meetings/Conferences. Question #2
	Presently, I respond to discipline situations using a restorative response. Question #8
<b>c. How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders' perceived effectiveness of the use of restorative practices?</b>	Rate your level of effectiveness when applying each technique with students. Affective statements/ Restorative questions/ Proactive circles/ Responsive circles/ Restorative meetings/Conferences. Question #3
	My use of restorative practices has changed the atmosphere of the school. Question #4
	Post-survey only: This class on restorative practices has changed my practice. Question #9
<b>d. How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders' perceptions of their abilities to teach/coach others about restorative practices?</b>	How comfortable do you feel teaching/coaching others about restorative practices? Question #9

	How often do you coach/teach others about restorative practices? Question #10
<b>f. How does job-embedded professional development in restorative practices affect first responders' response to discipline calls for African-American males?</b>	Pre-survey: The implementation of restorative practices will impact African American students' discipline data. Post-survey: The implementation of restorative practices impacted African American students' discipline data. Question #12
	Pre-survey: Implementation of restorative practices will change my interactions with African American students. Post-survey: This course changed my interactions with African American students. Question #13
	Post-survey only: Has this job-embedded training impacted your interactions with African American students? If yes, in what way? Question #15
	The implementation of restorative practices impacts discipline data. Question #11
<b>What is the impact of the premises of change theory driving Job-Embedded Professional Development</b>	Mid-/ Post-Survey Question 17: The reflective journals have changed my practice. Question 18: Analyzing the discipline data with my team has changed my practice. Question 19: The coaching and feedback during the school day has changed my practice. Question 20: This course on Restorative Practice has changed my practice.

## APPENDIX F: PRESURVEY

**By completing this survey, you consent to allowing your responses to be used for the purpose of this study.**

\* 1. Please rate your knowledge of each restorative practice technique.

Presently I understand the following concepts:

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 2. Please rate your knowledge of how to effectively implement each part of the Restorative Justice Framework in a restorative way.

Presently I understand how to implement the following concepts:

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 3. Please indicate how often you use each restorative practice technique.

Presently I used the following techniques:

	Not at all	Once a month	Once a week	Daily	Multiple Times a day
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



\* 4. Please rate your level of effectiveness when using each restorative practice technique.  
Presently I effectively use:

	Not at all effective	Just a little effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective	Extremely effective
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 5. Please rate your level of confidence about using each restorative practice technique.  
Presently my confidence level about using each technique below is:

	Not at all confident	Just a little confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 6. Please rate your level of effectiveness when using each component of the Restorative Justice Framework (5 R's).  
Presently my implementation of each is:

	Not at all effective	Just a little effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective	Extremely effective
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 7. Please rate your level of confidence about implementing each component of the Restorative Justice Framework (5 R's).

Presently I am confident about implementing:

	Not at all confident	Just a little confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. My use of restorative practices has changed the atmosphere of the school.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Presently I understand the relationship between the 5 R's.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Alot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Presently I am enthusiastic about using restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Presently I respond to discipline situations using a restorative practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Presently I feel comfortable teaching/coaching others about restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. How often do you coach/teach others about restorative practices?

Not at all	Once a Month	Once a Week	Daily	Multiple Times a Day
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Implementation of restorative practices will impact African American student's data.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Implementation of restorative practices will change my interactions with African American students.

Not at all

Just a Little

Somewhat

A lot

A great deal

☐☐☐☐☐

16. What do you expect to understand at the end of the class that you do not know now?

## APPENDIX G: MIDSURVEY

**By completing this survey, you consent to allowing your responses to be used for the purpose of this study.**

\* 1. Please rate your knowledge of each restorative practice technique.

Presently I understand the following concepts:

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 2. Please rate your knowledge of how to effectively implement each part of the Restorative Justice Framework in a restorative way.

Presently I understand how to implement the following concepts:

	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 3. Please indicate how often you use each restorative practice technique.

Presently I used the following techniques:

	Not at all	Once a month	Once a week	Daily	Multiple Times a day
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 4. Please rate your level of effectiveness when using each restorative practice technique.  
Presently my use of each technique is:

	Not at all effective	Just a little effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Extremely effective
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 5. Please rate your level of confidence about using each restorative practice technique.  
Presently my confidence level about using each technique below is:

	Not at all confident	Just a little confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 6. Please rate your level of effectiveness when using each part of the Restorative Justice Framework (5R's).

Presently my implementation of each is:

	Not at all effective	Just a little effective	Somewhat effective	Very Effective	Extremely Effective
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 7. Please rate your level of confidence about implementing each component of the Restorative Justice Framework (5R's).

Presently I am confident implementing:

	Not at all confident	Just a little confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. My use of restorative practices has changed the atmosphere of the school.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Presently I am confident that I understand restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Alot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Presently I understand the relationship between the 5 R's.

Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	Alot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Presently I respond to discipline situations using a restorative practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Presently I am enthusiastic about using restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Presently I feel comfortable teaching/coaching others about restorative practices.

Not at all comfortable	Just a Little comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Extremely comfortable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. How often do you coach/teach others about restorative practices?

Not at all	Once a Month	Once a Week	Daily	Multiple Times a Day
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Implementation of restorative practices has impacted African American students' discipline data?

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Implementation of restorative practices has changed my interactions with African American students.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. The reflective journals have changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Analyzing the discipline data with my team has changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. The coaching and feedback during the school day has changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. This course on Restorative Practice has changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. What additional information about restorative practices will be helpful?

22. Has the information you have received in the course thus far impacted your interactions with students? If yes, in what way.

## APPENDIX H: POSTSURVEY

Post Survey of Restorative Practice Professional Development Survey					
By completing the survey, you are indicating consent to utilize your responses for this study.					
* 1. Please rate your knowledge of each restorative practice technique. Presently I understand the following concepts:					
	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
* 2. Please rate your knowledge of how to effectively implement each part of the Restorative Justice Framework in a restorative way. Presently I understand how to implement the following concepts.					
	Not at all	Just a little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
* 3. Please indicate how often you use each restorative practice technique. Presently I used the following techniques:					
	Not at all	Once a month	Once a week	Daily	Multiple Times a Day
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



\* 4. Please rate your level of effectiveness when using each restorative practice technique.  
Presently my use of each technique is:

	Not at all effective	Just a little effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Extremely effective
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 5. Please rate your level of confidence about using each restorative practice technique.  
Presently my confidence level about using each technique below is:

	Not at all confident	Just a little confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 6. Please rate your level of effectiveness when using each part of the Restorative Justice Framework (5R's).  
Presently my implementation of each is:

	Not at all effective	Just a little effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Extremely effective
Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reintegration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 7. Please rate your level of confidence about implementing each component of the Restorative Justice Framework (5R's).

Presently I am confident implementing:

	Not at all confident	Just a little confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Affective Statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proactive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive Circles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restorative Meetings/ Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 8. My use of restorative practices has changed the atmosphere of the school.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 9. Presently I am confident that I understand restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 10. Presently I understand the relationship between the 5 R's.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 11. Presently I respond to discipline situations using restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 12. Presently I am enthusiastic about using restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 13. Presently I feel comfortable teaching/coaching others about restorative practices.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 14. How often do you coach/teach others about restorative practices?

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 15. Implementation of restorative practices has impacted African American students' discipline data.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 16. Implementation of restorative practices has changed my interactions with African American students.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 17. The reflective journals have changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 18. Analyzing the discipline data with my team has changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 19. The coaching and feedback during the school day has changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 20. This course on Restorative Practice has changed my practice.

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 21. Would additional information about restorative practices would be helpful?

Not at all	Just a Little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. In what ways has this course (job-embedded professional development) impacted your interactions with African-American students?

23. Reflecting on your use of restorative practices with students, what percentage of interactions do you feel students were positively impacted?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 0-20% of the time  | <input type="radio"/> 60-80% of the time  |
| <input type="radio"/> 20-40% of the time | <input type="radio"/> 80-100% of the time |
| <input type="radio"/> 40-60% of the time |   |

24. Reflecting on your use of restorative practices with students, what percentage of the time do you feel the situation was completely resolved?

☐ 0-20% of the time

☐ 60-80% of the time

☐ 20-40% of the time

☐ 80-100% of the time

☐ 40-60% of the time

25. If there was a time that restorative practices did not work or was not effective, please explain without giving identifying information about the child. Please give details of the situation and why do you feel it was not effective? Were there changes that may have made it effective?

26. If there was a situation that you feel that restorative practices were effective and made a difference, please explain without giving identifying information about the child. Please give details of situation and what made it effective? What changes did you see as a result of the restorative practices?

27. Is this job-embedded professional development something that you feel other schools should do? Please explain.

28. What additional training do you feel that you need in restorative practices? What would you suggest be the plan for the team's next 3 years for first responder's professional growth.

## **APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **The Impact of Participation in Job-Embedded Professional Development in Restorative Practices on Staff Use of Restorative Practices and the Disproportionality of Discipline Data**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to be a participant in a research study about the impact of participation in job-embedded professional development in restorative practices on staff use of restorative practices and the disproportionality of discipline data. You were selected as a possible participant because you are participating in restorative practices professional development and you are a “first responder” to discipline in the selected school. A first responder is a staff member who responds to support calls when teachers have determined that they need additional disciplinary support with a child and are critical decision makers when determining consequences. We ask that you read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to your child’s involvement in the study. The study is being conducted by a doctoral student in organizational leadership at Hood College.

#### **2. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact of participation in job-embedded professional development in restorative practices on staff use of restorative practices and the disproportionality of discipline data. This study will contribute to the research field by determining if job-embedded professional development in restorative practices is a strategy that will help to address the disproportionality of suspensions/referrals in schools. Moreover, this study will highlight the importance of first responders’ responses when addressing discipline in schools.

#### **3. VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY**

**Your participation in this study is voluntary.** Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Hood College or any of its representatives. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting those relationships. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher, DeVeda Coley, directly using the information provided below.

#### **4. DURATION**

The length of time you will be involved with this study is September 2018 through May 2019.

#### **5. PROCEDURES**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1) Complete three online survey questionnaires comprised of no more than 15 items about your knowledge, use, and application of restorative practices and your opinions on the content, format, and usefulness of professional development sessions. The survey is anticipated to take less than 30 minutes.

2) Maintain a reflective journal that will be collected and coded. Each journal entry should take no more than 20 minutes, and there will be 10 journal entries and 2 scenarios.

3) Work with your team to disaggregate and analyze support call, referral, seclusion, and restraint data. Support call logs and school-wide intervention support (SWIS) data will be used as the data sources. This will take no more than 45 minutes and will be a part of the class sessions.

4.) Be informally observed by the researcher when responding to a support call at least two times each month and meet with the researcher to discuss the observation. You will receive written and verbal feedback after each observation. 5) Participate in the Restorative Practices: Application course. The course will require 30 hours of instruction.

## **6. RISKS/BENEFITS**

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

The benefits of participation include support for restorative practices application in your current role. You will receive job-embedded professional development and will have the opportunity to collaborate with other professionals in the same role. The information gathered about your professional development experience and use of restorative practices will benefit school-based administrators and central office administrators in determining how funding can be used to support others in your role.

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

The records of this study will be kept private. Your identity will be kept confidential by removing any identifying information and using a pseudonym instead of your name. A pseudonym will be used to organize, categorize, and analyze student data. The surveys have been set so that no identifying information will be available to the researcher. Published reports and/or presentations will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant.

## **8. CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS**

The researcher conducting this study is DeVeda Coley. You may ask any questions you have now, or you can ask questions at a later time. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at 301-668-3258 or dec1@hood.edu.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to speak with someone other than the researcher, you may contact Dr. Joy Ernst, Institutional Review Board Chair, Hood College, 401 Rosemont Ave., Frederick, MD 21701, ernst@hood.edu.

## **9. STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

The procedures of this study have been explained to me, and my questions have been addressed. The information collected will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only. I am at least eighteen years old. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw anytime without penalty. If I have any concerns about my experience in this study (e.g., that I was treated unfairly or felt unnecessarily threatened), I may contact the

Chair of the Institutional Review Board or the Chair of the sponsoring department of this research regarding my concerns.

Participant signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX J: COURSE APPROVAL



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Date: December 14, 2019

Provider:



Course: Restorative Practices: Reflective Inquiry and Contextual Application

Status: Approval 18-10-09

Approved through December 31, 2023



approved and may be offered for Continuing Professional Development Credit (CPD). The approval ends five years from this calendar year on December 31. You may renew each course one time without revision; however, if state requirements should change in that time period, you may be asked to rewrite for re-approval. In addition, if you choose at any time within the five years or when you apply for a renewal of the application to offer the course digitally, you will need to resubmit the course to the [REDACTED] Department of Education for review for digital accessibility.

If you have any questions, contact



Sincerely,



Education Specialist II





## **APPENDIX K: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS**

**By the end of this course, participants will:**

Understand the principles of restorative practices- 5R's- Respect, Relationships, Responsibility, Repair and Reintegration.

Understand why Affective Statements are used and develop, use and reflect upon the use of them

Understand the difference between Retributive Justice, Zero Tolerance, Punitive Measures and Restorative Justice

Understand how implicit bias can impact responses to discipline calls and reflect upon implicit biases that are held.

Understand the components and application of Restorative Questions and reflect upon use of them

Understand how to analyze discipline data and develop goals to decrease disproportionality

Use guiding questions to determine whether the response to discipline support calls is restorative

Plan and facilitate restorative processes: restorative circles, restorative conferences, restorative conversations

Reflect on knowledge, use, the effectiveness of the use of restorative practices and ability to coach others in restorative practices.

### **Section 1: Principles of Restorative Practices**

Learn the principles of restorative practices

Discuss Restorative Justice Theory

Discuss the evolution of Restorative Practices in Education

Discuss the difference: Restorative Practices and Traditional Discipline

Discuss Proactive and Reactive Restorative Practices

### **Section 2: Data Analysis and Goal Setting**

Understand how to use data to set goals and address disproportionality

Analyze data each session

Disaggregate data each session

Set goals for improvement

### **Section 3: Application of Restorative Practices**

Create and Use Affective Questions

Use Restorative Questions

Observe, run, and participate in Restorative Circles/Conferences

### **Section 4: Reflective Practice**

Reflect upon use of Affective and Restorative Questions

Reflect upon knowledge, use, effectiveness of use of restorative practices/ coaching