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**IN-SCHOOL
BEHAVIOR
INTERVENTION
GRANTS**

A three-year
evaluation of
alternative
approaches to
suspensions and
expulsions.

**Report to the
Legislature**

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**As required by
1998
Minnesota
Law, Chapter 389
Article 2 Section 57**

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ESTIMATED COST OF PREPARING THIS REPORT

This report provides information which is maintained and published by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning as a part of its normal business functions. Therefore, the cost information reported below does not include the cost of gathering the data but rather is limited to the estimated cost of actually analyzing the data, determining recommendations and preparing this report document.

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In-School Behavior Intervention Grants

Final Report 1999-2001

Executive Summary

Introduction: In 1998, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$300,000 to the Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) for the implementation and evaluation of alternative approaches to suspensions and expulsions. Eighty-five districts applied for three-year funding and four districts were selected. Each of the four districts implemented a range of restorative practices and developed an evaluation plan aimed at measuring the impact in five areas: suspensions, expulsions, attendance, academics and school climate. An evaluator was hired to develop evaluation plans for each program. This final report includes a summary of restorative activities practiced in each district; program implementation challenges; and recommendations for further evaluation efforts.

Background: Restorative measures embody both philosophy and practice.

- A restorative philosophy emphasizes problem-solving approaches to discipline, attends to the social/emotional as well as the physical/intellectual needs of students, recognizes the importance of the group to establish and practice agreed-upon norms and rules and emphasizes prevention and early restorative intervention to create safe learning environments.
- Restorative intervention practices seek to solve problems and rule violations by bringing together the person who was harmed, the person who did the harm and the community (bystanders, classmates, staff, family and/or members of the wider community). Together, they talk about the problem and how individuals were affected, take responsibility for behavior, repair harm and restore order. Restorative practices in schools include victim/offender dialogues, group conferencing and circles to repair harm.
- Classroom management approaches that support restorative practices include the community building process such as community circles, circle time or daily class meetings; peer mediation and conflict management; building-wide programs such as *Restitution* or *Judicious Discipline*; comprehensive anti-bullying efforts; social/emotional curricula such as *Second Step*.

Three of the districts used the circle process to repair harm and as a classroom management tool. One district provided staff training on classroom and behavior management, used those practices with students in an intervention classroom, and provided circle training for teachers.

There is a growing interest in the usefulness of restorative measures, and a

Purpose of the Legislation

1998 MN Statute 398, Article 2 Section 57: IN-SCHOOL BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION GRANTS provided \$300,000 for a three-year evaluation of alternative approaches to suspensions and expulsions. The sum of \$13,500 was set aside to evaluate the impact of the alternative approaches in 5 areas: suspensions, expulsions, attendance, academics and school climate.

Restorative: *to give back, return; to repair the harm and rebuild all those harmed; and to reintegrate the person(s) who did the harm; restore a sense of well being and connection for those harmed, communities and those who committed the harm.*

--Restorative Measures: Respecting Everyone's Ability to Resolve Problems, MN Department of Children Families & Learning, 1996

Restorative Justice and Restorative Measures

are interchangeable terms that refer to a philosophy and a body of practices that attempt to restore wholeness after harm happens. Practices used in schools include circles to repair harm, restorative group conferencing and victim/offender dialogue.

keen desire for outcomes that prove or disprove particular methods. It is important to read this report for what it is: a summary of the evaluation of each initiative. Evaluation is used primarily to observe the process of implementation with an eye for improving a program, not to prove a particular theory, as with research. Both qualitative (stories) and quantitative (numbers) evaluation methods were used.

Implementation: Common Challenges

- *Gathering baseline data:* There were differing definitions and forms of suspensions: formal, informal, in-school and out-of-school. Each building staff had to agree on what they were going to count. Then a new system of tracking suspensions was set up. Finally, all staff had to be sure to input the data. For two of the districts, gathering baseline data was a three-year process.
- *Providing training:* Everyone needed an overview of restorative philosophy and practices. Training was offered to interested staff with opportunities for reflection on outcomes. Support from the principal and from colleagues was essential to encourage practicing the new skills.
- *Using restorative interventions in place of or in conjunction with traditional sanctions:* This was less likely to happen the more serious the offense—district policy sometimes superseded a restorative response. Zero tolerance policies often clashed with the intent of the program.
- *Consistently applying the principles:* Consistent application was more than the work of one person, and required efforts across the school, from the initial training for staff and orientation for new staff, to classroom management to use of restorative options.
- *Leadership* was required at the building and district levels to utilize time, money and effort most effectively.

Outcomes:

- Consistent application of restorative principles and practices—behavior management approaches and circles to repair harm—resulted in significant yearly reduction of behavior referrals and suspensions in one elementary school.
- A problem-solving resource room for at-risk students resulted in increased academic achievement in a high school.
- Teacher in-services on behavior management resulted in higher professional satisfaction.
- Teacher training resulted in high levels of teacher application in the classroom—in five elementary buildings, 50-70% of teachers use circles, behavior management skills and classroom management techniques.
- Baseline data was established for all buildings for future evaluation of suspensions and expulsions.

Restorative Justice in The School Context

"Restorative Justice stresses the importance of relationships over and above rules. It seeks at all times to restore the relationships between people when these have been damaged by inappropriate or offending behavior.... It is important that Restorative Justice is seen not simply as a response to extreme behavior but that the principles are in place in staff rooms, classrooms and playgrounds every day."

"Indeed a key restorative principle would be that the whole community develop the rules together and are involved in finding ways forward when these rules are broken—whoever breaks them."

---Transforming Conflict, a Center for Restorative Justice in Education, UK 2001; www.transformingconflict.org

Continuation

At the end of the grant cycle, three elementary schools were continuing their work at the same level, and the resource room was continuing at the high school. Two high schools lost their restorative justice planners because there was no other funding available to keep the positions after the grant money ran out.

Total Services Figures

All four districts, all three years:

Number of youth involved	15,351
Number of adults involved	2,158
Number of volunteer hours	4,820

Minneapolis Public Schools: Seward Montessori Elementary (K-8)

Seward is a K-8 Montessori Magnet school, drawing students from all over the Minneapolis school district. Seven hundred students attend the school, which has students that speak 27 different languages at home.

Overview: The restorative activities focused on two main areas: using the circle process in discipline proceedings conducted by administrators to aid the victim and help offenders repair harm, and training the staff to incorporate community building processes in the classroom. The administrative team responsible for discipline—the behavior specialist, teacher on special assignment and intern assistant principal—use the circle, conflict resolution, peer mediation and various versions of in-school suspension to handle conflicts and rule violations.

Training: The Behavior Specialist attended trainings on family group conferencing and along with the rest of the behavior team, circles to repair harm. A total of 50 staff (out of 75 full- and part-time staff) members attended training on either the use of circles in the classroom as a means of teaching social skills and addressing harm or *Responsive Classrooms*, a classroom management program that covers academic and social emotional topics, and includes the use of classroom meetings, similar to circle.

Application: The circle as a communication tool was incorporated into many areas of the school, from repairing the harm an unruly class perpetrated on a substitute teacher, to use as a strategy to help focus and connect the chess team before practices and tournaments, to helping classrooms transition from the regular teacher to a long term substitute, to use by the school's conflict mediators. In addition, the behavior specialist used the circle as a means of conducting discussions about moral dilemmas or group challenges, such as exclusion or bullying. The discussions served either prevention or an intervention function.

Suspensions and Expulsions

	<u>ISS</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1998-1999	28	28	0	not available	95%
1999-2000	32	8	0	414	96%
	4 combined ISS/OSS				
2000-2001	35	19	0	512	95%
	9 combined ISS/OSS				

The principal believes that the final year's numbers are the most accurate, as a reporting policy had been established and staff learned to follow it consistently by the third year.

Literature Circles and Moral Development

"We like to combine the circle process and quality literature to promote ethical character development. When we present a book with a moral value, we use a process promoted by Dr. William Glasser. The process states the first step is to generalize the value, then personalize the value, and finally challenge the group to embrace the value as their own."

The first pass around the circle, we ask the children, 'What is teasing?' The second time we ask the students to tell of a time when they were teased. Finally, we challenge the children and ask them, 'Next time you see someone being teased, what are you going to do?' We then ask the teacher to close the circle."
--Seward Grant Report, 1999

Abbreviations

ISS: in-school suspension

OSS: out-of school suspension

Combined: both ISS and OSS given to one student for one violation

Behavior Referrals: number of students sent to the office for rule violations

Expulsions: number of students barred from attending school in the district

Attendance: average daily attendance over the entire school year

Seward does not have an ISS room. Students serve ISS in another classroom, either doing assigned school work as the class goes on, helping the teacher as a tutor or aide, or participating in the activities of the class.

Attendance: An attempt was made to track the attendance of 40 students over the three years. They were selected because they had been participants in a restorative process. The tracking did not yield enough data for analysis as most of the students transferred to another school before the three years were up. District-wide, there is a 35% turnover rate of students transferring, enrolling for the first time or re-enrolling in a school. Seward has an 11.7% turnover rate.

Academic Achievement: Academic achievement was not tracked because there is no letter grading system on the elementary level in the Minneapolis system.

Climate: Teacher satisfaction with circle training was mixed; with a majority of participants indicating the training was useful. There was 100% satisfaction with the Responsive Classrooms training. By the end of the third year, approximately 70% of the teachers used the circle in daily or weekly community-building activities.

Service Figures

Number of youth involved	2100
Number of adults involved	125
Number of volunteer hours	574

The Chess Circle

"Two middle school boys were in competition with each other in both football and chess club. They both competed for football place kicker and for first board on the chess team. The boy who lost out in the chess competition definitely considered himself to be cooler than the other boy. He began making cutting remarks about the other boy's appearance, particularly his hair. When he did not stop, the other boy swung his notebook and hit him, giving him a bloody nose.

We could have suspended these boys, however, that would not have fixed the underlying resentments each had for the other. We invited their fathers in and did a circle instead.

The focus of the circle was on the role of competition and cooperation as boys transitioned into manhood. We discussed how their actions hurt the school, their class, the chess club and themselves. The fathers contributed insights. The circle concluded with a discussion of possible acts of restitution. It was decided that the boys would do two service projects. Each would tutor a child with special needs for 7.5 hours and each would tutor a beginning chess player for 7.5 hours.

The circle was a success in both the short and long term. The boys were able to repair the harm between them and they had insights into how to compete in a cooperative environment. Six weeks later, they are friends"

--Seward Grant Report, 2001

Princeton School District: Princeton High School (9-12)

Princeton is a rural district of approximately 3100 students, with two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school.

Overview: During the three years used for the study, the high school had a restorative justice planner in the building two days a week who conducted circles to repair harm and to support attendance. One planner worked for the first year, and another planner filled out the last two years.

Training: Both restorative justice planners attended a four-day circle training and a two-day circle keeper training. Modeling and in-class circle facilitation training was offered to all teachers all three years. In the third year, the planner offered educational sessions on restorative measures and the circle to classes.

Application: In the second and third years, all four high school deans referred student for circles as an alternative to in-school and out-of-school suspension. One dean conducted circles herself. The ninth grade dean found the circle useful in preventing problems by dealing with early stages of rumors and misunderstandings.

district had the least amount of money of all the districts participating, and did not conduct staff-wide trainings. As a result, the understanding of the philosophy of restorative measures and knowledge about the circle as a restorative process varied greatly among the staff. In addition, there had been a strong effort in the community to use the circle for juvenile and adult court cases, which had ended with some controversy. The rumors and perceptions of that community effort with restorative justice also left some staff leery of the attempts to use it in the high school. Referrals from teachers for students to participate in a restorative circle were inconsistent.

Suspensions and Expulsions

<u>Attendance</u>	<u>ISS</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals</u>	
1998-1999	881	132	0	1940	93%
1999-2000	1256	123	0	1969	92%
2000-2001	899	95	0	1478	95%

The first year is an accurate baseline of ISS and OSS, as the district had established a discipline counting system prior to the beginning of the grant.

An aide supervises the ISS room; teachers send up homework for the

Attendance

"A tenth-grade student was referred to circle for attendance issues. In addition he had also been in trouble for smoking. During the second circle he told a story about how he had not felt comfortable in school since he had been expelled the fall of his eighth-grade year. No one at the high school had any idea how traumatic the experience had been for him until both he and his mother talked about it in the circle. He told the members that this was the first time since the eighth grade that he thought anyone at school had really tried to understand where he was coming from."
--Princeton Grant Report, 1999

Student Circle

"One teacher came to the RJ planner very frustrated with a seventh- hour class and the behaviors of several students in that class. We arranged for a circle for one of the boys with the option of a follow-up circle if necessary. Several other students from the class attended as friends and supporters. So far, he has not needed the other circle."
--Princeton Grant Report, 2000

students to complete. A student can be sent to ISS to finish up the remaining time of a class period, for an entire day, or for up to three days.

In the second half of the second year, the planner negotiated with the deans on behalf of students to reduce suspensions when students agreed to participate in a circle. As a result, there was a reduction of 8.5 in-school suspension days and 24 out-of-school suspension days in the second half of the school year 1999-2000. In 2000-2001, an estimated 18 ISS and 30 OSS days were saved, because the deans sent students to a circle in an attempt to prevent a suspendable event, i.e., "after screaming but before a fight."

Attendance: Except for average daily attendance rates noted above, recording the attendance of specific students was not attempted.

Academic achievement: Academic achievement also was not evaluated due to the limited resources of the grant.

Climate: At the end of the second year, the restorative justice planner sent an evaluation to the staff. Approximately 100 people were given surveys. Twenty-seven were returned. Nineteen were positive or very positive. Five expressed no opinion and three were negative with two of the three recommending that the program is discontinued.

Service Figures

Number of youth involved	335
Number of adults involved	211
Number of volunteer hours	279

Staff Discussion

"During September, the high school staff was working on a restructuring plan for the next school year. Because of the contentious nature of the topic, the principal asked the restorative justice planner to facilitate a circle regarding scheduling possibilities, with department heads, the principal and the deans in attendance."

District administrators, school board members, teachers, parents and students observed the circle. After the circle, the planner received unsolicited positive feedback from teachers, district administration and participants."

--Princeton Grant Report, 1999

South St. Paul School District: Kaposia Elementary, Lincoln Center Elementary and South St. Paul Junior High (7-12)

Located in a first ring suburb, South St. Paul School District has an enrollment of 3570 students and consists of three buildings: two elementary and a 7-12 high school. A few staff members, including the superintendent, were instrumental in starting the local community restorative justice council, which provided support to the restorative justice planners in the school district. One school, Lincoln Center, began gathering data and implementing circles 6 months prior to receiving the grant.

Overview: In the first two years, restorative justice planners were located in each building, working with the administrative team on discipline, using the circle process to repair harm. In the third year, the number of planners was cut to two, with one serving the junior high, and the other splitting her time between the two elementary schools. Throughout the three years, the planners conducted circles to repair harm, circles of understanding in classrooms and circles to promote *Make The Peace*, a school-wide peacemaking campaign based on the statewide media program. They also provided teachers with modeling and technical assistance. The planners were members of the South St. Paul Restorative Justice Council, which was established before the district began using restorative justice practices in the schools.

Training: The planners attended a four-day circle training and a two-day circle keeper training. In addition, staff was trained in a classroom management approach titled *Restitution*, as well as in the circle process. The planners provided a variety of restorative trainings for the district staff, including summer weeklong trainings and in-services during the school year. More elementary teachers participated in circle training and *Restitution* than in the junior/senior high.

Application: By the third year, the principals in each elementary school also used the circle process as a discipline option. A third of the elementary teaching staff used circles daily as a community building tool, a third used it on a weekly basis, and in each building all but one teacher had asked the planner to come in to their class to help with classroom issues.

**Suspensions and Expulsions
Lincoln Center Elementary:**

	<u>ISS</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1997-1998	n/a	25	1	1662	85%
1998-1999	n/a	30	0	1143	94.8%
1999-2000	126	18	0	640	95.3%
2000-2001	42	11	0	407	95.5%

Racial Harassment

"A third grade boy made a derogatory comment to three other boys about their race. The restorative justice planner facilitated a circle of understanding. Through the circle process the victims explained that the comment reminded them of: an uncle being shot by a white man who called him the same name as he was shooting him, a movie that has 'those people dressed in white doing mean things to us,' and a victim said, 'It hurt my heart badly and I need to do something about it.' The offender/applicant explained that he then understood what he said was wrong. The students became friends and play together daily."

--South St. Paul Grant Report, 2000

The Trumpet Section

"Several members of the high school marching band had been experiencing a great deal of conflict, resulting in threats of violence and intimidation, seriously jeopardizing an up-coming overnight band trip. The RJ planner, band director and several members of the trumpet section conducted a circle to discuss the most recent conflict, commitment to the section, motivation, their relationships and the impact it has had on their performance. At a follow-up circle a month later, all present agreed that having the opportunity to address the discord within the section not only improved their performance but also helped them prepare for the new season."

--South St. Paul Grant Report, 2000

Kaposia Elementary:

	<u>ISS</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1998-1999	8	27	1	361	95%
1999-2000	25	4	0	442	96%
2000-2001	36	4	0	459	95.4%

So. St. Paul Junior High:

	<u>ISS*</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals **</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1998-1999		110	0		92%
1999-2000		65	0		93%
2000-2001		55	0		94%

*In-school suspension is not an option at South St. Paul Junior High.

**Behavior referrals were not officially tallied until the introduction of the student monitoring computer program in the 2001-2002 school year.

At Lincoln Center, in two years of circle application, behavioral referrals for physical aggression reported to the office went from seven per day to less than two per day. This decrease happened in spite of the introduction of a district-wide policy requirement that teachers must report any and all physical violence to the office. The decline continued into the fourth year.

Lincoln Center: Acts of Physical Aggression:

1997-1998 773 1998-1999 457 1999-2000 271 2000-2001 153

At Kaposia, in-school suspensions increased while out-of-school suspension decreased, because the administrators changed their policy for out-of-school suspension. They wanted to keep students in an academic setting and working, and not give them a free day. The planner believes the increase in behavior referrals was due to the requirement that bottom line behaviors be sent to the office. In the third year, the planner thinks the behavior referrals increased due to the fact that she was new to the teachers, and therefore they did not ask for her help until a month or two had passed and they got to trust her. It remains to be seen if the office referrals will remain in the 400's in the 4th year, which might indicate an average number of office referrals for a school that size.

In the junior high, suspension decreased considerably for both the 7th and 8th grades over the three years, even though the use of the circle to repair harm in the junior high school was not as 'regular' as in the elementary buildings; the deans and teachers did not always refer students to the planner, nor was the planner included in discussion of options for discipline in serious cases. Regardless of the decision-making process, having the option of a restorative circle helped to decrease the number of students sent out of school.

In addition, the junior high students who had had 1, 2 and 3 years of experience in the elementary school with all forms of circle, were quick to

Personal Experience

"I was in circle because some other kids and me had problems on recess. We had circle twice with Mrs. Elliot to talk it out. Since we had the circles we don't fight anymore. I think it helped to get to know each other. I barely see them but when I do I say 'hi' and they say 'hi' back. I learned that you don't have to fight to solve a problem."

Elementary student

--South St. Paul Grant Report, 2000

Unintended Outcome

"The junior high staff perceived the junior high students, 90 % of which came from the South St. Paul elementary schools, as good and easy to teach. The staff was so pleased with the manners of the students, that at the recommendation of the high school principal, they voted to give their staff development money to the two elementary schools, so that the adults there could continue to do their good work and send them good students"

--South St. Paul Grant Report, 2001

initiate circles, by seeking out the junior high planner for help with relationship issues, potential fights and other conflicts.

Attendance: Eighty students—twenty each from the three schools and twenty from the community—were tracked for attendance over the three years. Their attendance did not show much change, which is not surprising given the high rate of attendance the student body had as a whole.

Academic Achievement: In the first year, the same eighty students were tracked for academic achievement. There was no significant change in grades in the first two years, and by the third year all but two of the students had transferred out of the building.

Climate: Surveys were collected after circles to repair harm in all three buildings during the first two years of the grant, as a means of measuring customer satisfaction. A majority of circle participants—students, staff, parents, applicants and victims—indicated satisfaction with the process, with higher reports of feeling hopeful, grateful, confident and supported after the process. An equal number of participants thought the circle was either “harder than going through court” or “easier than going through court.”

Planners in the elementary schools conducted a climate survey of the staff regarding the impact of circles on classroom atmosphere and student discipline. The majority of staff agreed that the circles had a positive impact on those areas. In addition, staff agreed that the process was fair to teachers and students.

Service Figures

All Buildings

Number of youth involved	12,658
Number of adults involved	1,334
Number of volunteer hours	3,967

Samples of agreements from circles to repair harm

“Move dirt into the Peace Garden at Lincoln Center (the victim’s workplace) to help something as beautiful as a garden come from this. Settle the surface and prepare the ground for others to plant flowers at another date. Pick up the schoolyard four times.”

“Wash windows at the school, help the janitors set up the school for next year, and pick up Lincoln Center grounds.”

“Scrub marker marks off the school brick. Pay my share of cost to replace the damaged items. Volunteer in the library for at least 2 hours. Write an apology letter.”

--South St. Paul Grant Report, 2000

West Central Area Schools: K-12 rural consolidated district

West Central Area Schools (WCAS) consists of three buildings in three towns: two elementary buildings and one 7-12 high school, with a total enrollment of 970.

Overview: Over two years, 34 elementary and secondary teachers and administrators participated in 18 hours of Best Educators' Practices training. Para-professionals received two hours of training. For two years the Best Practices consultant was available at the elementary level for classroom consultation for teachers and students. In the third year, ten teachers and aides participated in weekend training on use of the circles in the classroom, to repair harm, build community, and as a teaching tool, and some teachers began using the circle in their classrooms.

During the same three years, through funding from another grant, the high school provided a resource room for at-risk students. The students who were referred to the room were at-risk of not graduating with their peers, and were not eligible for special education services. Their academic failure correlated with increased inappropriate behavior. The resource room teacher attended the Best Educators' Practice Group, and incorporated the classroom management techniques and restorative principles for the sessions into her resource room work. She developed a problem-solving approach to help students work more effectively with their classroom teachers, and to catch up and stay up with schoolwork. A concerted effort was put into addressing the mental health needs of the students, and to inform staff how mental health issues affected student achievement.

While some attempts were made to try to be more restorative at the disciplinary level, the high school administrators admitted they needed to work at addressing the needs of victims, and to include victims and community in the process of holding students accountable for their offending behavior.

Suspensions and Expulsions:

K-6 buildings

	<u>ISS</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals</u>	
<u>Attendance</u>					
1998-99	no data	0	0	62	96%
1999-2000	no data	0	0	78	96%
2000-2001	9	2	0	44	967%

High School

	<u>ISS</u>	<u>OSS</u>	<u>Expulsions</u>	<u>Behavior Referrals</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1998-1999	42	no data	2	233	94%
1999-2000	25	2	1	237	98%
2000-2001	44	13	1	195	967%

Staff Development

"At a Best Educators' Practice Group session, a veteran first grade teacher identified several students in her class who were not responding to the many tools for intervention she was using with them. After classroom observations and brainstorming, the Best Educators Practice consultant helped the teacher identify a group of colleagues who came together to develop a plan with this teacher based upon her most pressing needs. Many teachers are continually providing verbal and emotional support to the teacher.

One teacher said of this process, "...Discussing issues/concerns with one's colleagues is extremely helpful and we need to continue to voice this 'need' to our administration in hopes that we can continue this type of dialogue in the future."

--West Central Area Schools Grant Report, 1999

The elementary schools showed an over-all reduction in discipline referrals, but did not have data for ISS. The district installed a computer program for tracking discipline in 1999-00 in the high school, but documentation of disciplinary actions was not consistent until 2000-01. As a result, baseline data is not accurate on anything except expulsions.

Attendance: The daily attendance of twenty-nine high school students who participated in the resource room was tracked for three years. Students were absent from school an average of 3.4 days per quarter before the intervention and an average of 2.9 days after the intervention. This average difference of -0.5 days was not statistically significant.

The administrators made the decision to excuse all students from quarterfinal exams if they missed less than eight days per quarter, excused or unexcused. Students could take tests to try to improve their grades, but a low score for excused students would not count against them. This policy greatly increased attendance from year one to year two, and the majority of the student body maintained a less than eight-day total absence rate in the third year.

Academic Achievement: The thirty-nine high school students tracked for academic performance showed improvement. The mean percentage of credits earned by evaluated group was 83.5%. After the intervention—participation in the resource room—the percentage increased to 90.4% for the time period including (and in some cases following) their involvement in the resource room. This increase of 6.9% was statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

By identifying students at-risk behaviorally or academically, and supporting them to succeed, the school reaped several benefits. The behavior of students attending the resource room improved; few were sent to the office for any rule violation. The resource room teacher identified the need for students to be able to track their credits towards grade level advancement and graduation. Now all students in the school have a portfolio, and any teacher can stop almost any student in the hall and get an accurate answer as to the student's credit standing. This in turn set in motion academic and mental health interventions for several students who were very far behind academically. The principal indicated that the school graduated 8 students that had all the indications of dropping out of school. Besides the success of graduating students, the district reaped the financial benefit of keeping \$5,000 per student or \$40,000 total, a significant sum for a small, rural district.

Climate: The Best Educators' Practices Group and the para-professional training sessions received very positive evaluations. The Practice Group reported higher levels of professional satisfaction and feelings of support

After School Detention

"When students come after school to serve detention, the Resource Room teacher makes an extra effort to review with the students what happened to cause them to be in detention, and to do some problem solving.

'I feel it is very beneficial,' the teacher reported. 'Two things can happen: either the student learns how to avoid the situation in the future, or they are uncomfortable having to address the problems and so they make up detention in the morning, when I don't have the time for conversations and problem-solving. Actually, I have heard on many occasions this year that it wasn't worth being tardy if they had to sit down and talk about the impact of their choices.'

--West Central Area Schools Grant Report, 2000

from their peers. At the beginning of the third year, the high school faculty made a commitment to address bullying, respect for staff and among students, and to discuss what they as a staff could do to reduce student failure in the 2000-01 school year.

Service Figures

Number of youth involved	258
Number of adults involved	167
Number of volunteer hours	not applicable

Implementation Observation

"As with any new thing that you try to introduce in a school—email, a new technology, restorative measures—some people embrace it, and some think that it is hokey. Everyone in this district gave it a good look, at least"

--West Central Area Schools Grant Report, 2001

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In-School Behavior Intervention Grants

General Notes

Implementation Observations

In all schools, there were a variety of barriers to implementing restorative measures.

- Making time to use the process in school remained a barrier, even with resources such as money and training to address problems. A restorative process appears to take more time than the traditional responses of suspension.
- Reluctance to participate or to allow students to participate in restorative processes was a barrier, and often was due to a lack of knowledge about the principles of restorative practices, a lack of support from people in power and a belief in the efficacy of punishment.
- Concern for appearing “soft” or worry about a potentially failed process would block implementation, even when administrators were convinced the restorative process would be useful.

Implementing any new approach will turn up resistance. Because of that, and in keeping with the principles of restorative measures, participation in restorative practices or training needs to be voluntary for everyone, including staff. Invite people who are skeptical to participate and share their skepticism as a means of immediate evaluation and clarification.

All of the sites noted that it takes time, usually two to three years, to fully implement restorative practices, both classroom management and interventions. Each district had an advocate that had the spirit and energy to direct the work forward. Constant vigilance is required to ensure orientation of new staff and booster sessions for current staff. The more students, parents and staff are educated about restorative measures, the more they know what to expect and what to ask for.

Staff turnover or other new district initiatives affects the progress of a project. During the three years of the grant, ten staff left four buildings, and several major emotional crises (student and community member deaths) affected the spirit of an entire district. Any project can be sidetracked by new testing requirements, or the introduction of a new math curriculum.

There was a change regarding attendance among the evaluated districts and with other districts statewide. Because of the correlation between student attendance and improved performance on standardized tests, increased attention has been given to attendance. Many districts are striving for a 96% attendance rate, or only eight unexcused absences for the year. In some districts, this concern has affected discipline policy. Innovative methods have been tried to keep students, if not in their classrooms, at least in the building doing academic work. Restorative practices helped reduce the number of times students were suspended from school, while holding them accountable for their rule violations.

Elementary and Secondary: The Differences

Elementary and high schools have significant differences that affect the implementation of restorative

measures. Restorative planners from the schools made the following observations about each area.

In general, a teacher in an elementary school works holistically: she teaches all subjects, has one set of students all day, and those students are with the same classmates most of the day. Teaching social skills is an expected part of the work. There is a greater expectation for the teachers to handle discipline issues in the classroom. Because the teacher has the student for the entire day, he has a little more flexibility regarding time.

In contrast, a secondary teacher specializes in one or two subjects, and may see 100-150 students a day. The students may be with different classmates each period, which changes the social dynamic. Since the students are older, social skills are expected and not necessarily taught; some staff may expect adult behavior and skills from students. Teachers can, and some more readily do, refer discipline issues out of the classroom to the office. They have a shorter time to see the whole child. Finally, secondary school faculty works with a population that is going through incredible physical, intellectual and emotional changes.

All teachers feel the pressure to teach only academic content because of the renewed focus on standardized test scores and on implementing the graduation standards.

The philosophy of a restorative process may be more easily incorporated into the daily flow of an elementary school, where the students and staff are physically more connected, whereas in a secondary school the fragmentation of the day makes applying a restorative approach more challenging. However, several other high schools throughout the state have shown restorative practices can be integrated into the school when deans, school resource officers, school-based probation officers, assistant principals or counselors decide to conduct restorative conferences or circles themselves, or invite community facilitators to help.

Sustaining Efforts

Grant closeout interviews were held with the programmer or planner and administrators—deans, assistant principals, principals and superintendents. They discussed the impact of the grant and future plans for restorative measures.

Two grantees will continue restorative interventions as well as classroom management efforts—the elementary schools in South St. Paul and Seward in Minneapolis. Restorative justice as an effective process appears to be taking hold in South St. Paul: the school district, in spite of challenging financial constraints, added one RJ Planner to the district budget. In addition, when one principal resigned, the district replaced him with another principal with experience and commitment to restorative philosophies and practice. The junior high teachers agreed to send their staff development money to the elementary schools so that the staff there could continue to receive the training in circles and *Restitution*. The junior high staff liked the way students from Lincoln and Kaposia behaved.

The South St. Paul Junior High lost their restorative justice planner at the end of the grant, and there is no official plan to have any administrator be formally responsible for offering circles. However, the local community restorative justice council has offered to provide volunteer circle keepers for the high school, should the administrators request it.

Seward's discipline team continues to use circles as a discipline option, to address class challenges such as

expulsion on the playground, and to encourage staff to use community circles and class meetings in their classrooms. Eighty peer mediators are trained annually, and they conduct around 150 mediations per year. Many other schools in the Minneapolis district are incorporating restorative practices in regular education and special education settings and/or providing restorative classroom management training for staff. The district applied for and received funding for two years of staff development on restorative practices.

At West Central Area Schools, problem-solving and mental health needs remains the focus of the resource room. The administration at the high school level may try using a restorative intervention in the future, but it is not a part of the official discipline options at this time. There are no plans for staff development or new staff training in Best Educators' Practices at this time for either elementary or high school staff.

Wholesale changes occurred in Princeton at the end of the grant's final year. A new superintendent facing financial challenges brought new priorities to the district; there were many staff changes, from re-assignments to retirements to lay-offs. The restorative justice planner position ended with the grant. While the deans appreciated the usefulness of the circle process for early interventions and to repair harm, they admitted that added responsibilities given to them because of budget cuts, made it doubtful they would have much time to use the process.

Evaluation Challenges

A number of challenges came up as the evaluation elements were established. There were differing definitions and processes for suspensions—formal, informal, in school, out-of-school—and different ways of tracking suspension, attendance and referrals to the office. In some instances, there may be a different staff person keeping data on each area with no central collection point. In several instances, numbers varied from year to year, because the tracking system and categories varied from year to year. It was difficult to establish baseline data on anything but expulsions. And in all districts, zero tolerance or bottom line policy clashed with the intent of the study, where, for certain incidents such as tobacco use or drug possession, nothing can take the place of a suspension or expulsion.

There were divergent views on what constituted "school climate": physical space, policy application, emotional feel, individual perceptions or efficient practices? Most grantees tried to measure climate based upon the teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of restorative practices or their perceptions of school safety. Getting staff to fill in and return surveys is difficult and requires purposeful follow-through.

Defining recidivism is as difficult as defining suspension and climate. What should be the measure? No further referrals to the office, referrals for lesser offences, fewer offences? Over what length of time should one measure behavior change: a semester, a year, two years, until graduation? Given the variety of students in school, and the other challenges they may face in their lives, the standard of success could vary with each child.

Evaluation of all Behavioral Interventions

Trying to measure whether the restorative process works does raise a question about other disciplinary actions: does suspension and expulsion work? In a 1998 study by Costenbader and Markson on school suspensions, they summarized research on the effects of in and out-of-school suspension. Serious side effects of out-of-school suspension included:

- an increase in maladaptive behaviors not addressed by the suspension,
- withdrawal or avoidance of school staff,
- a negative impact on self respect,
- a stigma among peers,
- driving a school problem into the streets and community,
- disruption of educational progress, and
- loss of state aid based on average daily attendance.

In-school suspension has been correlated with drug use, poor academic achievement, grade retention and long-term disaffection and alienation. Costenbader and Markson's own research showed "that students who had been suspended were more likely to be involved with the legal system." (Costenbader, V. & Markson, S. (1998) *School Suspension: A Study with Secondary School Students*. Journal of School Psychology 0022-4405 v36 p59-82).

All disciplinary approaches should be evaluated for effectiveness, and not used because it has always been done this way or because it is the newest fad. Questions to ask about effectiveness include:

- Does it ensure the safety of others?
- Does it allow others to learn?
- Does it further the educational needs of the student who caused the harm?
- Does it aid the student who was harmed?
- Does it address the needs and enlist the help of bystanders?
- Does it show respect to the parents?
- Does it show respect to the staff?
- Does it connect the community?

No single process can address all of the harm that happens in a school or community. Schools need a variety of approaches to help the variety of students who enter their doors each day. Restorative measures are showing promise when applied consistently both as an intervention and to build community in the school. They give educators an effective approach to repair harm and keep students learning.

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In-School Behavior Intervention Final Report Addendum

In conjunction with the In-School Behavior Intervention grants, the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) conducted a survey of the Safe and Drug Free Schools district coordinators on restorative practices and classroom management approaches. Since 1996, CFL has, through technical assistance from the Prevention Unit and advice and recommendations from other units, explained and encouraged the use of restorative measures as another option in discipline policy and practice. The survey was an attempt to gauge the level of restorative activity in the state's school districts.

Restorative Practices

Three hundred fifty surveys were sent out in late fall 2000, and 268 (83%) were returned. About a quarter (24.5%) of respondents indicated yes to the question "does anyone in your district facilitate the following restorative practices?" The most common practice used is group conferencing (25%), followed by victim-offender dialogues (9.3%) and circles to repair harm (8.2%).

The most common facilitators were counselors (26.8%), social workers (21%), principals (11%) and school resource officers (9.6%), with other administrators – deans, assistant principals—classroom teachers and mediation coordinators listed as well. Facilitators were found at all levels: 40% at high school, 34% in middle/junior high school, 19.5 % at elementary and 7% at alternative learning centers.

Restorative processes were included as policy in 12% of the reporting districts and are listed as a discipline option in student handbooks.

Classroom Management

Three of the In-School Behavior Intervention grantees offered building wide classroom management training for staff as part of their programming. Using classroom management programs that teach the skills used in restorative processes supports the restorative intervention and seems to reduce the need for it in the first place. Among the grantees, staff attended trainings on *Restitution*, *Responsive Classrooms*, academic and social applications of the circle process, conflict resolution and problem solving using a variety of practices.

Fifty-nine percent of the reporting districts indicated there were schools that used building-wide classroom management approaches and many districts provided training to staff for these approaches. Dr. William Glasser's *Quality Schools* was the most commonly sited approach (33%), followed by the Johnson Brothers' *Cooperative Learning* (24%). Other classroom management programs used included Diane Gossen's *Restitution* (12%), *Positive Discipline*, Jane Nelson, editor (9.5%) and Committee for Children's *Second Step Curriculum*, (8%). (1)

To receive a packet of the survey questions and results, send your e-mail request to nancy.riestenberg@state.mn.us.

- (1) Glasser, William. *The Quality School: Managing Students Without Coercion*, New York: HarperCollins, 1990.
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