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Educator Perceptions of the Working Environment in Tennessee Elementary Schools that Actively Employ Positive Behavior Supports and Restorative Practices

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Educator Perceptions of the Working Environment in Tennessee Elementary Schools that

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ABSTRACT

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This phenomenological study captured the experiences of elementary educators with the purpose of gathering their perceptions of the use of restorative practices and positive behavior supports in their schools with a particular focus on how these programs influenced school climate, their professional efficacy, and their job satisfaction. Results of interviews lead to the emergence of seven major themes, which were the importance of understanding the underlying causes of student behavior, change, common practices of positive behavior supports and restorative practices, benefits for students, benefits for educators, struggles with implementation, and suggestions for implementation. These findings led to the identification of seven implications for practice and six recommendations for future research.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents, Clarence and Mabel Lamie, who made a lot of sacrifices to make sure that I understood the value of education. It is also dedicated to my wife, Catherine, and my children, Gavin, Farris, and Harrison, who gave me the go ahead to begin and the support to complete my degree program. Thank you all so much.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

According to the Safe Schools Report released by the Tennessee Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (2018), students in Tennessee engaged in 6263 actions that met the criteria for identification as "serious incidents." These incidents ranged from possession of weapons to assault on students and staff, and reported incidents do not even include serious issues, such as bullying and harassment. Issues of student safety have become so integral to the educational landscape in Tennessee that, in 2015, state legislators created the Tennessee School Safety Specialist Program (TSSSP) in order to ensure that all districts have access to at least one highly trained person who can support school safety planning. The report further highlighted legislation passed by the members of the Tennessee General Assembly that requires school personnel to report the number of bullying incidents reported by students each year. It also focused on the importance of school districts developing partnerships with local law enforcement, which includes the installation of school resources officers (SRO), and on the development of the *Building Strong Brains* program that helps educators understand the importance of addressing the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Of particular interest, the report acknowledges and promotes the growing trend to include the use of restorative practices and positive behavior supports to address issues of student discipline in schools.

The recent reputational rise of both restorative practices and positive behavior supports seemingly coincides with a lack of evidence that exists to support the use of zero-tolerance disciplinary methods that often require schools to suspend, expel, or refer students to alternative programs. In their report, the American Psychological Association's Zero Tolerance Task Force (2006) found that data collected from schools using zero-tolerance policies showed no

improvement in school safety. In fact, the removal of students from school was shown to increase the likelihood that the suspended students would continue to exhibit rates of misbehavior and were equally likely to be suspended again. Consequently, Perry and Morris (2014) found that exclusionary practices that define zero-tolerance policies negatively affect even the students in the school who are not suspended because they create environments in which the possibility of punishment is always in play. These findings indicate that removing students from school in reaction to their behavior may not be the best solution for developing successful schools.

In contrast with zero-tolerance policies, which focus solely on reactive responses, restorative practices address a wider range of opportunities. While reactive activities, such as formal restorative conferences, still exist within the framework of restorative practices, proactive activities, such as the use of restorative circles, affective questions, and affective statements, are also in place to address relationship building and community development before negative events occur. Ted Wachtel of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (2016) suggested that the purpose of restorative practices is to develop community through the management of conflict by repairing harm and building relationships. Essentially, the goal of restorative practices is to allow those involved in conflict to address each other in an environment that supports the idea of repairing relationships and allows the offender the opportunity to reintegrate into the community.

With all this in mind, one concern that arises when considering restorative practices and positive behavior supports as appropriate responses to student behavior is that, until recently, research related to implementing these practices in schools was quite limited. In their work, Evan and Lester (2013) specifically identified a lack of solid research data as a limitation for the use of restorative practices in schools. While there is a considerable amount of research focusing on the

effects of restorative justice programs in correctional facilities and community groups (Latimer et al., 2005), research on restorative practices in schools has been limited and often focuses primarily on analysis of school discipline records. This is a major issue because a decrease in the number of suspensions does not necessarily indicate a decrease in behavioral incidents or an increase in positive school culture. On the other hand, the work of Cameron and Thorsborne (2001), Morrison (2005), Ritchie and O'Connell (2001), and Tinker (2002) provided some insight into the ability of restorative practices to positively shape dispute resolution and school attendance. Also, a recent study by Lyubansky, Ortega, Espelage, and Nettles (2016) provided more support for school implementation and identified possible benefits. Even with these results in mind, it seems that a larger volume of research is needed to justify the level of optimism that seems to be aimed at restorative practices and positive behavior supports.

Statement of the Problem

Programs focusing on student behavior, particularly those that focus on restorative practices and positive behavior supports, may provide benefits to both students and educators if the needs of both groups are considered and addressed. While recent changes in the way schools address behavior indicate a shift from zero-tolerance policies to a focus on meeting the needs of students with a multi-tiered system of support that focuses on positive behaviors and restorative practices, research on the influence of these changes at the school level is limited and almost exclusively focused on the changes made with children. Educator perceptions, on the other hand, are rarely addressed in the current research. This is significant because it is the teachers and school leaders who implement the programs at the school and classroom levels. My study will focus exclusively on perceptions of staff members who have implemented restorative practices and positive behavior support programs in their schools and classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain knowledge of educators' perceptions of the use of restorative practices and positive behavior supports in schools, specifically the influence these programs have on school climate and student-to-student interactions. It also expanded the scope of the current literature to focus on educators' perceptions of the affect that restorative practices and positive behavior supports have on educator efficacy and job satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

The work of this study is shaped by self-determination theory. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) focuses on what motivates people to engage in specific actions without external influences or motivations. In their work, Deci and Ryan identified three universal needs that they feel drive individuals to act for intrinsic reasons, and these needs are a need for autonomy, a need to obtain competence, and a need for relatedness. Deci (1976) indicated that the need for autonomy stems from an individual's need to control elements of their experiences and, while not being wholly independent from others, to make decisions that allow them to maintain a feeling of free will. The concept of competence as a motivating factor is rooted in the works of White (1963) who identified the need for humans to control situations in order to experience mastery or at least the perception of mastery. Finally, the idea of relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) refers to an individual's need to build connections with and experience caring for others. The nature of restorative practices and positive behavior supports as being responsive to individual student needs, accessible and obtainable to educators, and focused on developing positive communities reflect the principles of self-determination theory, and this

study's focus on the emotional and motivational experiences related to these practices makes self-determination theory a solid framework on which to develop these ideas.

Research Questions

The central research question in this study is "what are educator perceptions of the influence of programs focusing on positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture, educator efficacy, and job satisfaction?" In order to target specific elements of the research, four sub-questions were explored:

Sub-question 1: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture?

Sub-question 2: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on their level of professional efficacy?

Sub-question 3: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on job satisfaction?

Sub-question 4: What elements of positive behavior supports and restorative practices are employed in the educators' schools?

Definitions of Terms

This study involves the following definitions:

Behavior Intervention Plan

A behavior intervention plan is a formal, written plan based on the results of a functional behavior assessment that establishes the link between a behavior of concern and its function, formalizes a plan to teach appropriate behavior, and identifies setting elements, rewards, and consequences that will be used to support the development of appropriate behavior.

Corporal Punishment

The intentional use of discomfort or physical pain to punish a child's behavior (Bitensky, 2008).

Functional Behavior Assessment

A thorough assessment of student behavior data completed by a team of stakeholders for the expressed purpose of identifying specific motivations for a student's behavior (Lloyd et al., 2017).

In-school Suspension

A type of suspension is which the student is removed from the classroom but is still present on campus and is supervised by a representative of the school.

Job Satisfaction

A positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation" (Weiss, 2002, p. 175).

Out-of-school Suspension

The removal of a student from school campus for a specified period of time due to behavioral challenges (Gage et al., 2020).

Positive Behavior Supports

A set of strategies that uses research and data-collection to increase quality of life and decrease problem behavior by making adjustments to a person's environment and teaching them new skills that support their goals (Association for Positive Behavior Support, n.d.).

Restorative Circle

"A circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and

problems" (Wachtel, 2016). A restorative circle consists of parties coming together in a physical circle to discuss an issue with all parties given an opportunity to share.

Restorative Justice

A process where all stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and to decide what should be done to repair the harm" (Braithwaite, 2002).

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices are a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. (Wachtel, 2016). Restorative practices are not limited to formal processes, such as restorative conferences or family group conferences, but range from informal to formal. For this study, we will consider restorative practices to include the use of formal conferences, restorative circles, small impromptu conferences, affective questions, and affective statements.

School Culture

The traditions, beliefs, policies, and norms within a school that can be shaped, enhanced, and maintained through the school's principal and teacher-leaders (Short & Greer, 1997).

Zero Tolerance Policy

"A philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context" (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008)

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

The focus of this study was on the intersection of practices that teachers may use to influence student behavior and the role that teacher efficacy and job satisfaction have on their ability to perform effectively. In order to provide context for this connection, it was important to present some perspective on how restorative practices and positive behavior supports evolved into practice in education. It was also important to provide insight into the idea that employee satisfaction with such programs may lead to increased efficacy and productivity. With this in mind, the review of literature began with a consideration of student discipline and the affect that student behavior has on the educational experience. Then, the review provided some history of restorative practices and their roots in restorative justice. Next, the review considered the transition of these restorative practices from criminal justice settings to educational ones and the influence that they have had there. From there, the focus will transition to the concept of positive behavior supports in school settings and their connection to restorative practices. Finally, in order to support the idea that how an employee feels about the programs and processes they use can affect their output, the review considered the influence of employee satisfaction on productivity.

Student Behavior and Educator Responses

Educator concerns regarding inappropriate student behaviors have been reported in America since at least the early days of the public school system (Morris & Howard, 2003). Since then, issues of student behavior and the responses required to address them have been a common topic of conversation across education. Historically, the conversation around student behavior has been rooted in larger narratives in the national discourse at the time (Butchart & Landau, 1999) even reflecting the passionate debate about who and what it means to be

American and what ideas should be passed on to future generations. In this context, the expansive breadth and depth of responses used to address student behavior should come as no surprise. Consequences, including after-school detention, in-school and out-of-school suspension, verbal reprimands, fines, corporal punishment, and even expulsion, have been used by educators over time to respond to student behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). While these approaches are primarily punitive, modern approaches, such as schoolwide positive behavior supports and restorative practices often take a more therapeutic approach (Vincent et al., 2016).

Corporal Punishment in Schools

Corporal punishment is defined as the intentional use of discomfort or physical pain to punish a child's behavior (Bitensky, 2008). The use of corporal punishment to attempt to change the behavior of children has been documented even in early societies (Diamond, 2013). In modern times, the practice of corporal punishment in schools has been banned in 128 countries around the world (Gershoff, 2017). In the United States, however, the US Supreme Court Decision in the case of Ingarham vs Wright (1977) found the practice to be constitutional. In turn, the practice is still legal in 16 states with use of the practice heavily concentrated in the Southern United States (Gershoff & Font, 2016). Proponents of the practice generally rationalize the practice based on three rationales (Poole et al., 1991). The first of these, which often develops through a religious framework, is that adults have the right to discipline children who misbehave and, in fact, may have the duty to do so. The second is that the practice builds character as students are taught to respect the authority of adults. Finally, the rationale that corporal punishment is a needed tool to maintain discipline in the classroom.

Research suggest that corporal punishment does not produce the desired effect. Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor (2016) found no significant correlation between the use of corporal

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punishment and increased student compliance in the short-term. These finding also held true over the long-term as Regev et al. (2011) found no significant correlation between the use of corporal punishment and neither long-term compliance nor moral behavior. Instead, research suggests that students who receive more corporal punishment are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior and misbehavior in the future (Berlin et al., 2009). These findings suggest that the use of corporal punishment as a discipline technique is more heavily rooted in tradition than it is supported by intended outcomes.

There is also evidence to suggest that the use of corporal punishment can lead to unintended, negative consequences. Talwar et al. (2011) found that children in West African schools that used corporal punishment displayed decreased executive functioning and obtained lower vocabulary scores than students in schools that did not allow corporal punishment. Similarly, students in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam who experienced corporal punishment at age 8 were more likely to experience lower levels of self-efficacy, lower levels of self-esteem, and lower scores in both math and vocabulary at age 12 (Ogando Portella & Pells, 2015). In the United States, the majority of research on the use of corporal punishment focused on its use by parents, but these reports suggest negative outcomes as well. The use of corporal punishment by parents has shown to correlate with increased issues with mental health (McLoyd et al., 2007), strained parent-child relationships (Coyl et al., 2002), and lower cognitive ability and academic achievement in affected children (Berlin et al., 2009). In short, the use of corporal punishment has been shown to be both ineffective in achieving its intended purpose and to increase the probability of affected students experiencing unintended and negative consequences.

Out-of-School Suspension

The use of out-of-school suspensions for student discipline began in the 1960s and continues to this day (Adams, 2000). Despite the continued use of the practice, research suggests that its benefits are questionable. Perry and Morris (2016) found that students who were subject to suspension displayed lower rates of both school performance and engagement. There is also a correlation between suspensions and higher rates of both grade retentions (Nolan & Anyon, 2004) and students dropping out of the school (Suh & Suh, 2011). Wolf and Kupchick (2017) even identified a link between suspensions and increased contact with the criminal justice system.

Pragmatically, a major concern with the use of out-of-school suspension is that it often leaves students without supervision (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Skiba and Peterson suggested that this is an issue of particular concern considering the fact that the students who are most likely to be suspended live in circumstances that are more difficult than those of the average student, and these students also tend to have more dangerous peers. Access to additional unstructured time creates opportunities to become involved in even more dangerous activities.

Further issues arise in the application of suspensions. For instance, students identifying as black were 10 percentage points more likely to be suspended than white students even when adjusting for differences in prior problem behaviors (Huang, 2020). This suggesting that a racial gap exists in the application of suspensions that are not the result in differences in a student's history of behavior leading up to the suspension. It should be noted that this discrepancy does not necessarily indicate racial bias, but it may suggest that implicit bias (Ispa-Landa, 2018) and differential treatment (Owens & McLanahan, 2019) may play a role in differential application of suspensions. The concern here is that students who feel that they are being

disproportionally targeted by the application of suspensions are more likely to become disconnected from both the school and even the idea of justice (Youth Rights Media, 2005). This disconnect erodes the necessary relationships that support students as they progress through their educational experience.

Suspension of students with disabilities requires additional considerations. In the court case Honig vs Doe (1988), the indefinite suspension of students for behaviors directly related to their disabilities were found to be a violation of their rights under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In response to this ruling, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which was enacted in 1997, included specific regulations related to suspensions of students with disabilities when the behavior is a direct result of the disabling condition (US Department of Education, 2020). Specifically, students with disabilities suspended more than 10 days have the right to an IEP meeting in which the team will determine manifestation, which is where the team reviews data and decides if the behavior is related to the child's disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). If the behavior is not found to be a manifestation of the disability, the student may be disciplined under the school discipline policies as written. If the behavior is caused by the student's disability, the IEP team must identify appropriate responses, such as the development of a functional behavior assessment, modifications to the child's behavior intervention plan, and even consideration of alternate placements. These requirements provide additional motivation for schools to create alternatives to suspension, particularly for students with disabilities.

In-School Suspension

One alternative to suspensions out of school is the use of in-school suspension. In-school suspension is defined by the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2014) as

removal of a child from his or her regular classroom for at least half of a day while still being under the supervision of school personnel. Unlike out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension requires students to be in attendance with the implication that this will provide a more meaningful alternative to being removed from the building completely (Smith et al., 2020). Smith et al. also suggested that new regulations that limit the use of out-of-school suspensions for certain student populations, such as young children, and for certain infractions, such as willful defiance, could increase reliance on in-school suspension.

Research on the influence of in-school suspension is limited. Of the research available, Cholewa et al. (2018) found that students who received in-school suspensions experienced lower grade point averages and higher dropout rates than students who did not. Smith et al. (2020) found that students who received a single in-school suspension experienced a 57% increase in standardized test failures than those who did not. Additionally, students who received 5 or more in-school suspensions were 120% more likely to fail a standardized test compared to peers who had not received an in-school suspension. Despite these results, researchers in both studies identified limits in their research that suggest the correlation between in-school suspensions and reported outcomes does not necessarily represent causation. Furthermore, both teams suggest further study targeting the outcomes of in-school suspension is needed.

Zero Tolerance Policies

Beginning as a response to issues of drug enforcement in the early 1990s (Skiba & Rausch, 2006), the use of zero tolerance policies quickly spread to cover a number of student discipline issues. In their review of such practices, the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) identified zero tolerance policies as policies under which predetermined consequences, which are often severe and punitive, are applied to discipline

infractions "regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context" (p. 1) This means that school leaders have few options when they wish to provide leniency or to scale consequences based on the nature of an infraction. The idea behind the strategy was that, if students engaging in challenging behaviors were removed from common environments, other students would be less likely to engage in disruptive behaviors (Ewing, 2000), and the remaining students would be able to work in a more appropriate environment (Public Agenda, 2004).

In spite of the hopes of advocates, the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance task force (2008) found very limited evidence to suggest that the policies achieved these goals. In its review of literature, the task force identified a number of claims made by advocates of zero tolerance policies and found research support lacking if not outright counter to these claims. For example, in their review, the task force found that the claim that zero tolerance policies led to greater consistency in overall school discipline and greater clarity for students regarding this policy was inaccurate. Instead, consistency in school discipline was found to be as greatly tied to school personnel and their educational philosophies as to student attitudes and understanding. Additionally, the task force found that current data at the time did not support the claim that removing disruptive students from an environment would make it more conducive to learning for the remaining students. Instead, the task force found that schools with a higher incidence of suspension and expulsion had lower ratings for school climate. While this certainly does not suggest that the reason for the low school climate ratings was the use of zero tolerance policies, it does suggest that initial claims of improved school climates were overly optimistic. Finally, the claim that applying severe and certain punishments for disruptive, behavioral infractions would deter students from engaging in similar behavior in the future. Again, this

claim was not supported by evidence. Instead, rates of suspension in the present tended to predict higher rates of suspension and misbehavior in the future. Furthermore, rates of suspension and expulsion were found to be moderately correlated to students not graduating on time or dropping out of school all together.

In response to these findings, the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) made suggestions that would shape thinking regarding student discipline moving forward. One of the suggestions most germane to this research was to find ways to reconnect alienated students to the larger community of the school. The task force suggested that this process would require schools to find ways to reestablish the bond between students and school who were at-risk for discipline issues and to apply consistent procedures for accurately identifying risk levels of student language. These policies could address issues of student alienation, which are tied heavily to juvenile delinquency (Catalano et al., 2004) and school violence (Vossekuil et al., 2002). Another suggestion addressed in the report (2008) was to develop preventative measures to improve school climate that sense of community in the school. Research related to the topic suggested that environments most successful in dealing with issues of student discipline were characterized as having high levels of student support and community (Osher et al., 2001). Finally, the task force (2008) suggested that schools should provide a spectrum of services to support students with behavioral concerns. These services include restorative justice, alternative programs and community service.

Restorative Justice

The use of restorative practices in schools stems directly from the use of restorative justice in criminal justice settings, but use of these types of practices is considerably older (Zehr, 2005). Two groups, the First Nations people of Canada and the Māori people of New Zealand,

played a significant role in the development of the norms and practices of restorative justice because they developed its framework with consideration of elements already at play in their cultures. By approaching the process in a way that reflected a belief in shared values and the importance of community, they were able to refocus the process of justice so that the outcomes best served the larger group.

Before the implementation of restorative justice programs, interactions at the correctional level were primarily focused on punishment of the offender with little to no interaction among the parties involved after the incident of offense (Zehr, 2005). Restorative justice, on the other hand, represented a dramatic departure from traditional methods of addressing criminal acts because, instead of focusing on punishment, the emphasis was on confronting and addressing issues that existed between the offender and the offended. This was achieved through meetings that included both victim and offender and possibly members of the larger community. In these meeting all parties shared their perspectives of the incident, discussed how the experience changed them, worked to identify who was harmed by the incident, and then developed an agreement that established a pathway that allowed the offending party to repair the harm that they have caused.

In the United States, the earliest example of this process in formal practice occurred in 1978 when Howard Zehr, the grandfather of the modern restorative justice movement, directed a victim-offender reconciliation program in Elkhart County, Indiana (Umbreit & Armour, 2010). Zehr (2016) developed the framework for restorative justice around three key ideas. The first idea was a focus primarily on the needs of the victim, while also providing some consideration to the needs of both the offender and the community. While previous criminal justice programs had focused primarily on the offender and the system's punitive response to their actions, Zehr's

program redirected the energy in the process to both meeting the needs of the victim and providing some perspective to the offender regarding how his or her actions affected those around them.

The second key idea was that the offender has an obligation to repair the harm that they have caused as much as possible (Zehr, 2016). Since participation in restorative justice programs is almost exclusively voluntary for all parties, only offenders willing to accept the idea that they needed to right their wrongs were provided this option. In return for their efforts, offenders who successfully followed the path to restoration as outlined by the participants were provided an opportunity to restore their position in the community and move forward. Similarly, in situations where victims were uncomfortable with the idea of facing their offenders, traditional justice programs were the only option for the offender.

The final key idea of restorative justice is that the justice process must include multiple stakeholders working together to build consensus (Zehr, 2016). While traditional justice programs often require third parties, such as judges and juries, to provide consequences based on their limited perspectives of the incident, restorative justice allows for those most closely affected by the incident to develop an agreeable plan for restoration. This plan identifies who has been harmed, what needs the injured have related to the incident, and what obligations the offender must address to achieve restoration. Through this process, victim experience becomes the highest priority, and offenders are provided the opportunity to make amends in a more direct and meaningful way.

Restorative Questions

In his work, Zehr (2016) described restorative justice as less of a program and more of an approach. One of the major tools in his approach is the use of a set of restorative questions. The

restorative questions are designed to guide the work of restorative justice but are flexible enough to be useful in a variety of contexts. The restorative questions, as described by Zehr, are as follows:

1. Who has been harmed?

2. What are their needs?

3. Whose obligations are these?

4. Who has a stake in the situation?

5. What are the causes?

6. What is the process to involve stakeholders in an effort to put things right and address underlying causes?

While all models of restorative justice use the restorative questions as a guide, the actual structure of restorative justice models can differ greatly from one setting to another (Zehr, 2016). In fact, newer structures have emerged that represent a blending of models used in the past. One of the more common models for restorative justice is the victim offender conference (VOC). This model focuses primarily on the interaction between offender and victim with a facilitator guiding the process through the use of the restorative questions. In this model, the effect of family and community members is limited. On the other hand, family group conferences (FGC) explicitly involve family and community members as partners in the process.

Circles

Although not as ubiquitous as the use of restorative questions, the use of circles is a common practice in many models of restorative justice (Zehr, 2016). The idea of using circles is rooted in the community practices of Indigenous people (González, 2016) and was adapted for use in restorative justice. The circle process provides a structured setting in which participants

are able to share their specific perspectives (Pranis, 2005), and they can be used for conflict resolution, healing, decision making, and relationship development.

While circles can serve a variety of functions and differ in structure depending on these functions, there are a number of elements common to process (Pranis, 2014). The first is that participants are seated in a circle that allows everyone to see each other easily. This creates accountability among the participants and also creates a space that deemphasizes the idea of having to choose sides in the discussion by focusing on a common purpose. Additionally, tables are generally removed from the circle space because they inhibit the participants' abilities to read body language and act as natural mental barriers between groups.

Another common element of circles is the talking piece (Pranis, 2014). The talking piece grants the holder temporary control of the conversation. While the holder is speaking, all other participants in the circle must refrain from speaking until their time with the talking piece begins. Often the talking piece is an item that is already important to the participants in the process. During the circle activity, the talking piece is passed from person to person so that only one person is able to speak at a time. The primary function of the talking piece is to control the flow of conversation. When participants respect the role and function of the talking piece, it allows the user to speak at an unhurried pace and to fully express their thoughts and feelings. It also levels the power dynamic in the circle. When all participants in the circle are able to have a turn with the talking piece, the control of the conversation moves from a small number of conversation leaders to a more decentralized dynamic. By creating a single point of focus for the process, the talking piece serves to provide a space where the thoughts of all participants are heard and provided equal consideration.

A third common element of circles is the use guiding questions (Pranis, 2014). In restorative circles, the conversation is driven by the guiding questions inherent to restorative justice (Zehr, 2016). In these settings, the guiding questions are directed to all participants in the circle as appropriate (Pranis, 2014). The combination of the guiding questions and the use of the talking stick creates an opportunity where participants can engage in deep and meaningful conversation.

A final element common to circles in the role of a Keeper or facilitator (Pranis, 2014). Unlike other conversation formats where a leader works to control the flow of conversation to reach a certain outcome, the job of the facilitator in a circle is to ensure that all participants are provided a space to speak honestly without be disrespectful to others. To do this, the facilitator's focus needs to be on the quality of the activity at hand and not on the subject of conversation itself. In this way, the facilitator is both a member of the group and outside of it. They must concern themselves with making sure that all members of the group are able to participate in the space equally without being pulled into the emotion of the conversation itself. In order to achieve the goals of the group, the facilitators may need to take action to manage time, ensure that conversation is moving in the direction that the participants initially intended by asking questions that may steer the participants to the purposes they identified before the activity began, and even suspend the rules of the talking piece so that the group can address a component of the conversation in a less structured way. In short, the facilitator makes sure that the circle activity is a valid representation of the restoration process.

Effect of Restorative Justice Programs

As awareness of restorative justice programs and practices increased, the question of effectiveness began to become an issue of concern. Publishing a mega-study encompassing all

research published on restorative justice conferencing in England between 1986 and 2005, Sherman and Strang (2007) found promising results. Victims supported by restorative justice conferencing reported greater ease with returning to normal activities, such as going to work, and getting sufficient sleep. The process also led to increased satisfaction of the victim compared to those whose cases were handled in traditional justice settings (McCold & Wachtel, 1998; McGarrell et al., 2000; Strang, 2006). Additionally, victim satisfaction with the process was more highly correlated with the ability to participate in the process than with the extent of restitution provided to them by the offender (Strang, 2006).

One of the early goals of restorative justice programs offered to youth was to reduce the likelihood that participants would reoffend. In an early study, Bonta et al. (1998) found an average reduction in offender reoffending rate of about 8%. Other early studies, including the work of Hayes and Daly (2004), Luke and Lind (2002), and McGarrell (2001), also showed evidence that restorative justice programs lead to a lower likelihood of reoffending. On the other hand, studies by McCold and Wachtel (1998), Niemeyer and Shichor (1996), and Umbreit (1994) found no significant reductions in recidivism.

More recent studies have focused on recidivism while also considering other factors that may limit the sway of restorative justice. In her research involving the justice department in Maricopa County, Arizona, Rodriguez (2007) examined juvenile recidivism rates of those served under a restorative justice model to compare it to the rate of recidivism for those served under a more traditional model. She also looked at how the program outcomes were influenced by the type of offense and participant criminal history as well as issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. Results of the study indicated that juveniles served through the restorative justice program were .704 time less likely to reoffend within a 24-month period. She also found that while gender

played a role in recidivism, as boys were 1.391 times more likely than girls to recidivate, no significate differences in recidivism related to race or ethnicity. Finally, she found a correlation between an increased number of prior offenses and the likelihood of reoffending, and this was even more true in the group offered restorative justice than traditional justice.

Bergseth and Bouffard (2007) addressed the issue of the long-term effect of restorative justice, as much of the research at the time focus on relatively short-term outcomes. In their study, the focus was on offender outcomes four years after they were referred to either restorative justice programs or traditional justice programs. Results of their study were supportive of restorative justice. First, they found that, when holding other factors as equal as possible, offenders offered restorative justice were only 59% as likely to reoffend as those served through the traditional justice model. This group also showed a decrease in future police contacts and, when they did have future contacts, tended to show less serious behavior. More pointedly, the models showed that being provided restorative justice was a significant predictor for positive outcomes even when controlling for age at referral, race, gender, residence in small cities vs rural areas, number of prior police contacts, and seriousness of the offense for which they were being served.

A study performed by Bouffard et al. (2016) considered the influence of restorative justice programs based on their structure. Specifically, the authors considered programs that provided direct mediation, programs that focused on more indirect mediation where the victim and offender did not interact face-to-face, community panel programs, and a program where participants received only minimal interaction with staff trained in restorative justice. Results of the study supported restorative justice programs as participants in all forms of restorative justice programs, including the program with only minimal interaction, showed reduced recidivism rates

compared to peers served in the traditional justice program. These findings indicate that restorative justice options may be scaled based on the other factors related to the offender. For instance, offenders who are deemed lower risk due to their limited criminal history may be served in less structured programs and still benefit. They theorized that this might make restorative justice options available to a larger number of offenders through a continuum of options.

The benefits of circles of support and accountability may even help reduce recidivism for those convicted of serious crime. A review of the Minnesota Circles of Support and Accountability program (Duwe, 2018), which pairs sex offenders recently released from prison with a circle of support that meets regular to address issues with reentry to the community. Results of the study showed that participation in the program significantly reduced sexual recidivism even over time, as the average follow-up period was six years. Participation also lowered the risk of rearrest for a sexual offense by 88% and rearrest for any crime by 57%. The program also reduced reconvictions by 55%, resentences by 51% and revocations by 49%. Additionally, the program has led to a reduction in costs to the justice system of about $2 million, which represents around $40,900 in savings per participant. The results of this study and the studies addressed previously suggest that there is value in restorative justice programs.

Expansion of Restorative Justice Practices and Programs

As the use of restorative justice spread through North America and into Europe during the 1980s and 1990s, the practices and procedures began to spread to programs outside of criminal justice, including programs run by community-based agencies, church-based organizations, victim services, and attorneys' offices (Umbreit & Greenwood, 2000). Expansion into new communities led to new procedures and vocabulary. Soon practitioners were inviting

stakeholders to participate in restorative conferences and circles that provided increased support for both offenders and victims in the form of family and friends that could provide emotional support to both parties (McCold, 1999).

As the number and types of restorative justice programs grew in the United States, international groups were forming as well. One of these earlier programs, known as the family group conference (FGC), was implemented in New Zealand in 1989 (Doolan, 2003). What began as a process to empower families of native Māori people to address concerns regarding the rate of child removal experienced in the community transitioned into a community policing strategy spearheaded by Australian Police officer, Terry O'Connell, in 1991. In his work, he took the idea of the family group conference and applied it to youth offenders in hopes of helping them to avoid jail time. Three years later, in 1994, Australian educator Margaret Thorsborne brought the idea of the restorative conference to Australian schools (O'Connell, 1998). Around the same time in Canada, parole officer, Mark Yantzi, was using restorative justice practices to unite two teenage vandals with their victims, which lead to their willingness to agree to provide restitution (McCold, 1999). This experience eventually led to the development of a reconciliation program in Kitchener, Ontario, (Peachey, 1989) that served other youth offenders.

In 1994, the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) formed in southeastern Pennsylvania as an extension of the restorative practice work that had been provided to the area by the Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy since the late 1970s (Watchel, 2016). The IIRP provides services focusing on three areas: education, consulting, and research (IIRP Staff, n.d.). The education element refers specifically to programs of study in restorative practices leading to both graduate certificates and master's degrees. The organization also provides consultation services, including to K-12 schools planning to implement restorative

practices in an appropriate way. Finally, the IIRP adds to the research base relative to restorative practices through their publications.

Other Organizations Focused on Restorative Justice

Over time, a number of other organizations have expanded the message and work of restorative justice. In 2013, the National Association of Community Justice was formed to act as the controlling body over the National Conference on Restorative Justice (Nilsen, n.d.). The conference is scheduled to occur every two years, and the 2017 conference hosted over 1,300 attendees. While the conference has grown, so has the NACJ, which had over 600 members in 2016-2017, which was the last year full membership numbers were taken. The organization is preparing for its next conference in July of 2022 after having to postpone events for a number of years due to COVID-19.

Several academic institutions have expanded their dedication to restorative justice and host centers of learning that are focused on its principles. For example, the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University (Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, n.d.) offers both master's degrees and graduate certificates in restorative justice. Additionally, the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking housed on the University of Minnesota Duluth campus hosts trainings, conducts research, and provides consultation services to organizations that need help designing restorative justice programs (Center for Restorative justice and Peacemaking, n.d.). One final program of note is the Centre for Restorative Justice at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia (The Centre for Restorative Justice, (n.d.). The Centre offers undergraduate and graduate courses in restorative justice as well as an online certificate program for continuing education.

Restorative Practice in Schools

As participants and advocates began to understand the value of restorative justice in juvenile justice programs, the transition to schools became a natural expansion. The use of restorative practices in schools seems to have originated in Queensland, Australia where a school-based restorative conference was used as part of the response to an assault at a school event (Sherman & Strang, 2007). The positive outcome experienced in this situation motivated the government to launch a trial program in over 100 schools. As highlighted by Cameron and Thorsborne (2001), a trial and subsequent expansion of this restorative conference program in Queensland found high participant satisfaction with outcomes, high compliance rates by offenders with the conference agreements, low rates of reoffending, an increase feeling of acceptance by most of the offenders, an increased feeling of safety for the majority of victims, and an increased sense of community. Success in this program led to the practices being adopted in schools across Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom before moving to schools across Europe, Canada, and the United State.

Restorative practices in schools take on many forms. In fact, one of the key issues that affects the implementation of restorative practices in schools is that there is often confusion on what restorative practices even are. In some cases, the terms "restorative practice" and "restorative justice" are used interchangeably. On the other hand, groups such as the IIRP consider restorative justice as a subset of restorative practices (Wachtel, 2016). While restorative justice is purely reactive and formal, the idea behind restorative practices is that they also include practices that are informal as well as proactive that help to build relationships and community.

Fronius et al. (2019) identified the various ways in which circles can be exemplify the flexibility of restorative practices. On one hand, community-building circles are used

preemptively to develop and strengthen relationships among students and educators while building trust. On the other, peace-making circles follow a more formal and traditional approach to circles that bring parties together who were involved in an incident of harm. Both of these activities support school goals, so both may have their place in a restorative practice program.

One element of restorative justice that clearly transitions to the school setting is that restorative practices in schools value the possibility of reconciliation for people who have committed an offense against the larger group. Unlike traditional methods of discipline that react to the actions of the offender and apply a punishment that rarely even includes the victim, restorative conferences focus on active participation by both the offender and the victim to seek reconciliation (Van Ness & Strong, 2015). This reconciliation is addressed through the creation of an agreement between the parties involved that defines what the offender must do to show that they accept accountability and wish to repair the harm caused. This provides an opportunity for the offender to make amends to the larger community and to reintegrate (Johnstone, 2002).

Additionally, the benefits of restorative conferences are not limited to offenders. Victims also experience positive outcomes in that the restorative conference process gives victims the opportunity to share with offenders how their lives have been affected by the events (Van Ness & Strong, 2015). In optimal outcomes, offenders are able to view their victims with increase humanity, and victims are able to find some closure. Similarly, educators who act in supervisory roles for restorative practices may also see benefits. Unlike traditional discipline methods, restorative practices provide opportunities for educators in positions of authority to work with offenders and victims instead of acting for them or against them. This process gives practitioners a means to avoid shaming and stigmatizing offenders to the point that they are pushed to a negative societal subculture from which they have difficulty escaping (Braithwaite, 1989).

Unlike the exclusionary nature of zero-tolerance policies, restorative practices aim to build communities and relationships.

The value in the proactive strategies involved in restorative practice may lie in the fact that they give students an opportunity to develop their emotional intelligence. In his work, Daniel Goleman (1998) indicates that one of the reasons that youth can struggle with violence and behavioral concerns is because schools have become overly focused on intelligence and academics while limiting opportunities for students to develop empathy, responsibility, caring, and anger control. In light of this, he feels that is important for schools to focus on alternative methods of discipline that help students reestablish and strengthen relationships after engaging in unacceptable behavior. He also identifies the need for schools to provide opportunities for proactive development of these skills, particularly for students who may not have appropriate role models in their homes.

Affective questions and affective statements are proactive, informal tools that support restorative practice (McCold & Watchel, 2001). The process of using affective statements involves the teacher responding to student behavioral concerns by clearly indicating how it makes them feel, such as sad or disrespected, so that students can learn how their behavior affects others (Harrison, 2007). Similarly, affective questioning asks students to consider the reactions of others by asking them who they have affected with their actions and how these people have been affected. The process of affective questioning provides students with the chance to move beyond reprimands to an emotional state where they think about the true outcomes of their behavior, work to make amends with the affected party, and adjust accordingly in the future (Morrison, 2003).

Influence of Restorative Practices in Schools

Despite the excitement surrounding restorative practices, empirical evidence supporting the implementation of the practice in school is limited, and more research is needed (Augustine et al., 2018). In the United States, the bulk of information regarding the use of restorative practices in schools comes from books, nonpeer-reviewed articles, or institutional reports that evaluate programs being implemented in a single city or district (Evans & Lester, 2013). Even in situations where research is taking place, analysis may heavily focus on school discipline records before and after the implementation of restorative practice programs or reflect on results from practices that have only been in place for a short time. For example, a study conducted in Pittsburg Public Schools (Augustine et al., 2018) found an improvement in school climate as reported by teachers and a reduction in both average suspension rates and disparity in suspension rates. The study also indicated that the process did not provide the same benefits to all students, as the suspension rates of middle school students and male students with disabilities were not affected. Additionally, the study found a reduction in academic performance in 6-8 schools implementing the program and no reduction in suspension rates. With that said, the restorative practices program that was the focus of the study only had a 2-year implementation period at the time of completion, so results may be a greater reflection of the specific implementation of the program than of restorative practices themselves.

Another American study focusing on the use of restorative practices, particularly restorative circles, took place in the southeastern United States (Lyubansky et al., 2016). In this study, 35 students and 25 staff were interviewed regarding their perception of the use of restorative circles in their school. The results indicated positive feelings regarding student ownership of the process, interruption of the school-to-prison pipeline, improved relationships,

meaningful dialogue, a focus on less destructive ways to deal with conflict, and an increase in

educators' perception of the maturity, behavior, and confidence of the students. Lyubansky et al.

also found that issues existed in the process that involved frustration when other participants told

lies in the circle and disappointment that some participants had trouble being serious throughout

the process due to a fear of appearing vulnerable.

Outside of the United States, however, researchers have been able to highlight promising

results related to conflict resolution, improving attendance, and resolving disputes. Along with

the events of Queensland Australia, the Nottingham Restorative Conference Project in the United

Kingdom evaluated the results of 105 conferences in 8 schools and found both an increase school

attendance and a 78% success rate for restorative conferences, which is based on the criteria that

"the issue was resolved" (Tinker, 2002). Finally, in Brazil the school-wide use of restorative

conferences lead to a 98% reduction in police visits for one school and a 93% satisfaction rate

for over 400 restorative circles in San Paulo (Gillison et al., 2010).

Positive Behavior Support

Positive behavior supports (PBS) is a behavior approach that involves organizing systems

of support to help children and adults achieve basic lifestyle goals while reducing behaviors that

pose barriers to these goals (Dunlap & Carr, 2007). The implementation of positive behavior

supports began in the 1980s for use with persons with disabilities (Sailor et al., 2011) as public

opinion at the time was moving to support deinstitutionalization. In the 1980s, the most

prominent practices used to address severe behaviors when working with persons with

disabilities over the previous 20 years were becoming a cause for concern. These methods, which

were used to address behavior including self-injurious behavior, aggression, and sexual

deviancy, were known as behavior modification techniques and employed the use of punishers,

which included the use of electric shocks. While these techniques were viewed as acceptable for use with institutionalized clients, the shift in public sentiment in support of deinstitutionalization meant that service providers need to replace methods that could be viewed by the general public as barbaric, in spite of research validating their effectiveness. This need was particularly important as programs for students with disabilities were becoming more widely available in schools.

One of the earliest papers addressing a system of positive behavior supports was authored by Gaylord-Ross (1980). In the paper, the author suggests a multi-tiered, decision-based model that allows for a variety of treatments formed through applied behavior analysis to be provided as needed for clients. In this model, punishment responses were reserved for situations in which clients had first moved through a number of positive behavioral approaches without success. This structure of providing a number of options with a focus on using positive approaches if possible has characterized the field of positive behavior support.

Over time, the field of positive behavior support has been become defined by four core features (Sailor et al., 2011). The first of these features is that programs must be built on research-based practices. The second is that there needs to be multiple interventions available in order to provide the best response for the client. The third is that implementation of practices needs to be focused on meaningful and durable changes in the life of the client. Finally, the fourth core feature is that positive behavior support programs need to be implemented by organizations dedicated to helping clients make positive, long-term changes.

Extrapolation of these core features to community supports eventually led to the development of positive behavior support programs in schools (Lewis & Sugai, 2017; Sugai et al., 2000; Walker et al., 1996; Weisz et al., 2005). In fact, a series of seminal studies in the 1990s

focused on how schools could create effective, schoolwide programs of discipline for students of all ability levels (Colvin et al., 1993; Colvin et al., 1994). Results of these studies identified the importance of both teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior to students (Sailor et al., 2011). These results highlighted the consistency between the practices and goals of these approaches to positive behavior support and more traditional applications of PBS. At this point, work in schoolwide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) is a viewed as a vital contributor to the work in PBS as a whole.

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support

The primary focus of a schoolwide positive behavior support (SW-PBS) approach is to align the systems of support in a school so they establish both a positive school culture and provide individual student supports in a way that creates a safe and effective learning environment for all students (Sugai & Horner, 2011). The nature of SW-PBS is not that of a standardized curriculum or program that is implemented the same in all schools. Instead, it is an approach that supports educators as they adopt, evaluate, and maintain systems of evidence-based practices that address student behavior, classroom management, and school discipline. This allows practitioners to modify and adapt approaches as needed. In order to determine the appropriateness of each element, SW-PBS requires a systematic evaluation of impact. Specifically, this means that schools using a SW-PBS approach must identify and track measurable academic and behavioral outcomes (Bambara et al., 2005). The approach also requires schools to use this data to drive decision-making practices and to focus primarily on implementing practices that are already supported by research. Finally, educators are tasked with developing systems of support that help increase both the accuracy and durability of interventions.

Schoolwide positive behavior support in practice is defined by six characteristics (Sugai & Horner, 2011). The first is that it is grounded in applied behavioral analysis and behavioral theory. These approaches put a high level of value on observable behavior (Thomas et al., 2014). The second characteristic of SW-PBS is a focus on prevention with particular emphasis on the prevention of influences that trigger problem behavior, an increase of intensity of the problem behavior, and the development of new problem behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2011). The third characteristic of SW-PBS is a focus on instruction, specifically the direct teaching of behaviors that will lead to academic and social success at school. The fourth characteristic is a focus on research-based interventions that have been evaluated and can be replicated with consistency. The fifth characteristic is the dependance on a systems-based approach that prioritizes implementation fidelity and regular outcome evaluation. Finally, the sixth characteristic, which is closely tied to the first, is the collection and use of data related to the implemented practices.

Tier 1 Supports

Positive behavior support programs in schools are generally implemented in a three-tiered system that provides different levels of support based on student need (Gage et al., 2020). The first of these tiers, which is identified as Tier 1, includes all students in the school. Training related to this tier is generally provided to all educators at a school. The major goals of work as this tier are to teach students behavioral expectations, to develop positive student-teacher relationships, and to ensure academic and behavioral success for all students. While the nature of PBS discourages standardization, there are elements common to PBS implementation in schools. Some of these elements include explicitly teaching behavioral expectations through modeling and practice, the development of systems to recognize and reward positive student behavior, and the collection and analysis of student behavior data.

Tier 2 Supports

The second tier of supports, appropriately called Tier 2, provides supports to students who have been consistently receiving Tier 1 supports but have not responded appropriately to them. According to Gage et al. (2020), Tier 2 interventions generally consist of eight characteristics. The first and second characteristics are that the interventions can begin at any time throughout the year and that they can begin within 2 or 3 days of a student identifying need. The third and fourth characteristics are that they are interventions that are easily added to a teacher's classroom routine and that they are easy to train teachers to implement. The fifth characteristic is that the interventions need to be aligned with the Tier 1 system the school already has in place. In a sense, Tier 2 supports should be viewed as extensions of Tier 1 practices that are targeted for individual students. The sixth characteristic is that all educators should be aware of the interventions and individual educator roles related to the intervention should be clearly defined. The seventh characteristic is that interventions should be flexible enough to be modified to provide maximum benefit to a target student. Finally, the eighth characteristic is that interventions should address the function of a student's behavior.

Check In/Check Out

While interventions used within the Tier 2 support systems are not limited by a list of approved supports, common techniques include self-management strategies, such as self-recording behavior, direct social skill instruction, token economics, which often present as a point system through which students are rewarded for displaying appropriate behavior, and the use of peer-provided behavior incentives (Sugai & Horner, 2011). Another common technique is Check In/Check Out (Newcomer et al., 2013). Check In /Check Out (CICO) programs create a system of feedback for students in which they meet with a mentor at the beginning of the day to

review behavioral expectations (Gage et al., 2020). Throughout the day, these students are then provided feedback from their classroom teachers based on how well they are meeting these expectations. This feedback is often provided through the distribution of points for successful displays of appropriate behavior. At the end of each day, students meet with their mentor again to discuss progress and to receive reinforcement when goals are achieved. The use of CICO programs increases student-teacher interactions and provide students with consistent feedback aligned to school expectations (Conley et al., 2018). Check In/Check Out programs have been successfully implemented at both the elementary (Fairbanks et al., 2007) and high school levels (Tobin and Sugai, 2005) with identified benefits including increased student academic engagement and reductions in office referrals.

Tier 3 Supports

The third tier of supports, which is referred to as Tier 3, are reserved for students who display a need for the most intensive and targeted supports and cannot be appropriately served by the supports provided in Tiers 1 and 2 (Gage et al., 2020). The primary elements of support at this level are the completion of a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and the subsequent development of a behavior intervention plan (BIP). A functional behavior assessment is a thorough assessment of student behavior data completed by a team of stakeholders for the expressed purpose of identifying specific motivations for a student's behavior (Lloyd et al., 2017). Identification of the function of behavior allows for targeted supports that address student needs and provide pro-social replacement behaviors. The specific strategies for teaching and reinforcing replacement behaviors as well as supports to reduce and prevent behaviors of concern are then addressed in the behavior intervention plan, which is also developed by the team and reviewed regularly.

Influence of School Wide Positive Behavior Supports

Several studies on the effects of positive behavior supports systems in schools show promising results when such programs are implemented with fidelity (Gage et al., 2020). In their review of group-based experimental studies, Gage et al. (2019) identified a significant reduction in suspension in schools implementing PBS when compared to schools not implementing such programs. These outcomes were supported by state-level research in Georgia (Gage, Grasley-Boy et al., 2018), Florida (Gage, Lee et al., 2018), and California (Grasley-Boy et al., 2019) that showed similar reductions in both in-school and out-of-school suspensions in schools implementing PBS with fidelity. These results also held for students in students in vulnerable groups, such as students of color and students with disabilities (Gage, Grasley-Boy et al., 2018).

Along with a reduction in suspensions, schools implementing positive behavior supports programs schoolwide identified several additional benefits. Bradshaw et al. (2008) identified a staff-reported improvement in schools' overall organizational health, resource impact, staff affiliation, and academic emphasis, which are all indicators of positive school culture, in schools that implemented PBS with fidelity. Ross et al. (2011) identified a significant correlation between implementation of SWPBS and both lower levels of burnout and increased levels of efficacy. These correlations were found to be particularly strong in schools that served students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Wasdorp (2012) found that rates of teacher-reported incidents of bullying and peer rejection in schools implementing SWPBS were lower than those in schools that were not. Furthermore, these results indicated that students who were exposed to SWPBS at an earlier age were even less likely to engage in peer rejection than those exposed later in school. Finally, Bradshaw et al. (2010) identified elements of increased academic performance that, while not statistically significant in the study, suggested that students in

schools implementing SWPBS outpaced the growth of students in schools not implementing

SWPBS in three of four standardized tests administered throughout the duration of the study.

Teacher Stress

As noted in the work of Ross et al. (2011), one of the benefits of instituting programming

to address student behavior, such as a positive behavior support program, is that it correlates with

a reduction in teacher burnout brought on by stress. As an exercise, teaching is highly stressful

(Chang, 2009). While there are many elements of the profession that lead to stress, issues related

to student behavior are one of the most common identified in research (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

According to Klassen and Chiu, the issue of student behavior stems from the fact that students

are not fully developed at any point in their K-12 educational experience. This creates a situation

where teachers are constantly addressing behavioral issues caused by the mismatch between a

student's current stage of development and the behavioral requirements of the educational

setting. Since behavioral expectations must increase throughout a child's academic experience in

order to address increasing demands, tension between behavioral expectations and behavioral

understanding continually exist and must be consistently addressed.

Issues related to students' behavior leading to teacher stress are particularly pronounced

in situations where teachers spend more time reprimanding students than engaging the students

in positive encouragement (Reinke et al., 2012). When a classroom is built on a dynamic where

the majority of responses to student behavioral concerns are reactive instead of proactive, stress

confrontations are more common. In situations where this dynamic was in place, teachers

reported higher levels of exhaustion, stress, and burnout. Considering these findings, one of the

benefits for schools that use restorative practices and positive behavior supports may be that they

refocus the conversation regarding student behavior from reactive to proactive strategies as well as from punitive to positive teacher-student interactions.

This issue of teacher stress is particularly important considering the influence it can have on their feelings of self-efficacy. For example, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) found that stress can negatively affect a teacher's feelings related to how good they are at their job and how capable they are to create positive outcome with students. Despite the stress level generally associated with the profession, teachers usually find satisfaction with their work and feel that they can make a difference (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008), but increased levels of stress can dim these feelings considerably.

Teacher stress can also affect teacher performance. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that reductions in teacher self-efficacy levels were correlated with increased levels of teacher stress. Considering these results in light of Woolfolk-Hoy and Burke-Spero's (2005) findings that show a correlation between a teacher's feelings of self-efficacy and the ability and willingness of that teacher to implement effective teaching strategies, a connection between teacher stress and teacher performance can be established. Further support for this idea was provided by Abel and Sewell (1999) and Kokkinos (2007) who identified a correlation between increased teacher stress and a reduction in teacher effectiveness. While much of the focus on teacher stress rightfully addresses the personal influence that it has on teachers, these findings suggest that issues of teacher stress can also affect the education of the students that they teach.

Increased levels of stress over time can even affect a teacher's dedication to their job. McCarthy et al. (2009) found a correlation between teacher stress levels and expressed levels of professional burnout, which can lead to increase levels of professional attrition. In another set of studies, Klassen and Chiu (2010; 2011) identified correlations among job stress, job satisfaction,

and job commitment. These findings along with those previously discussed suggest that stress can negatively influence teachers both personally and professional and can lead to negative outcomes both for the teachers and their students.

School Culture

One of the common goals of programs that address student behavior (Bradshaw, 2008) is to develop a strong school culture. Schein (2017) provided a succinct definition of group culture:

> The culture of a group can be defined as a pattern of shared assumptions as it solves its problems of external adaptations and internal integrations, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (p.18)

School organizational culture is important because it allows the beliefs, passions, and traditions of the organization to be transferred to the work in a way that is meaningful and passionate (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Not only does the culture of the school affect the day-to-day operations of the organization, but it also influences the direction the school might go in the future. In the school setting, culture is reflected in the actions of the educators, the students, and the teachers, and it is often difficult to pinpoint at any one time. The culture of a school guides how people act, how they dress, what they do and do not talk about openly, when and how often they interact with their colleagues, the propensity for and effectiveness of teacher collaboration, and the way teachers feel about their school and students.

Schools with strong school cultures have exhibited a number of positive outcomes. Historically, schools with cultures identified as purposeful and conducive to learning were found to foster high expectations for all students, focused the work of staff, and generated motivation to learn (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). In a landmark study, Rutter et al. (1979) found that school

culture, which they described as school ethos, had a significant effect on student achievement. They found that the norms, values, and traditions of a school shaped the organization in ways that promoted academic achievement. Additionally, Fullan (2020) reported that a school's culture was critical to the academic success of its students because the nature of education is one of an environment that requires constant change. When a school's culture was not strong or supportive of the community, the organization was unable to meet the demands of the ever-changing landscape of education. Finally, a meta-analysis of 155 studies that focused on 1,211 associations among various school factors and student outcomes found that measures of school culture correlated moderately with student outcomes (Scheerens et al., 2013).

School culture also influences teachers' job satisfaction levels. Morris and Bloom (2002) found that organizational culture affects an employee's job satisfaction and the effectiveness of the overall organization. In their study of school culture, Treputtharat and Tayiam (2014) found measures of school culture and teacher job satisfaction to be highly correlated with a correlation-coefficient of 0.84. They also found that measures of school culture also predicted the outcomes of teacher satisfaction measures at a rate of 72.1%. These findings indicate that schools with positive and effective school cultures are more likely to contain teachers who report higher levels of job satisfaction.

There are a number of identified ways in which school culture affects teacher satisfaction. First, it improves collegiality, cooperation, and group problem solving (Fullan, 2011). Schools with a strong culture consistently reinforce the idea that everyone in the organization is working toward a common purpose. To support this idea, these schools develop systems they make sure that all stakeholders feel that they are heard. Schools with strong culture also build commitment and spark motivation. In these environments, teachers are motivated by the noble purposes

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valued by the organization. Motivation is further supported by rituals, stories, and traditions that purposefully reinforce the importance of the work. Finally, school culture amplifies the energy in the community of students, educators, and parents while also fostering and strengthening trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The social climate of a school can be infectious, but this can present itself in both positive and toxic environments. Schools with positive, supportive, and optimistic cultures often find these values reflected in the educators that work there. Schools that have toxic elements in their culture may often find these influences reflected in their educators.

Toropova et al. (2020) deepened the conversation regarding school culture and job satisfaction levels by looking at the effect of individual elements of school culture of teacher job satisfaction levels. The study used data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study in 2015 and found a substantial correlation between teacher working conditions and teacher satisfaction. Specifically, teacher perception of student discipline, overall workload, and teacher cooperation were found to be the most highly correlated to teacher satisfaction. Interestingly, the effect of these factors was often dependent on characteristics of the teachers themselves. For example, the correlation between levels of teacher cooperation and job satisfaction were higher in male teachers. Also, perceptions of student discipline in a school were more important to teachers with a lower sense of self-efficacy. In short, both teacher characteristics and overall school culture can positively or negatively influence levels of teacher job satisfaction, which can influence a number of other facets of the profession.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

The benefits of teachers being actively engaged and satisfied with their work are numerous. One of the benefits for individual teachers is that teachers who are satisfied with their work are less susceptible to stress and burnout. In their study, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011)

found that job satisfaction was negatively correlated to motivation to leave a position, which is to say that teachers who experienced higher levels of job satisfaction were more likely to stay in the profession over the long term. One of the factors that they found to be positively related (0.28) to job satisfaction was a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging was positively correlated with several potential contributing factors. One of these factors was value consonance, which measures how a person's values are reflected in their work. While a number of other factors, such as support from supervisors (0.23), relationships with colleagues (0.26), and relationships with parents (0.13), were positively correlated with the feeling of belonging, the relationship between belonging and value consonance showed the strongest correlation (0.3). This result suggests that when teachers are working in environments where they actively engage in activities and programs they believe in, their job satisfaction levels increase and this leads to a reduced likelihood of burnout.

In a related study, Toropova et al. (2020) found that student discipline and teacher cooperation measures were moderately correlated with an increase in teacher job satisfaction. While a somewhat weaker positive correlation existed between job satisfaction and teacher workload, teacher perceptions of student discipline and their feelings about how they interacted with colleagues were most highly correlated with job satisfaction. Researchers focused on both student behavioral outcomes and institutional response to behavioral needs in the study. Regarding student behavior, teachers were asked to provide insight into student willingness and ability to act in an orderly fashion, student respectfulness regarding teachers, and student respect of school property. On the institutional side, teachers were asked to rate their schools on how clearly they defined student conduct rules and how administrators and teachers consistently enforced these rules. One interesting discovery in this study was that the influence of student

discipline on job satisfaction levels was affected by teacher efficacy. Student discipline did not significantly shift job satisfaction levels for teachers who reported high efficacy beliefs. In contrast, job satisfaction levels for teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy were negatively affected by negative feelings about student discipline.

Teacher job satisfaction has also been correlated to higher quality instruction and more supportive learning. Kunter et al. (2013) found that teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction and enthusiasm for work were better able to support student learning needs and handled issues of student behavior more effectively. In turn, students in the classes of these enthusiastic teachers were more motivated to engage in learning activities, showed a significant increase in mathematics enjoyment, and showed higher achievement gains.

The final element benefit of teacher job satisfaction is that it helps to reduce teacher turnover. Higher levels of job satisfaction have been shown to be positively correlated with both teachers' initial commitment to the profession in the early years of their career as well as a continued commitment to the work as the years go by (Blömeke et al., 2017). Not surprisingly, these findings are in concert with studies of other professions that suggest job satisfaction is positively correlated to job commitment (Judge et al., 2005; Lubinski & Benbow, 2000).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This qualitative study was designed to examine educator perceptions of positive behavior supports and restorative practice programs on the school environment and the working environment. On the school environment side, the focus was primarily on the influence of such programs on the culture in their schools. Regarding working conditions, research focused on educator beliefs regarding the effect of positive behavior support and restorative practice programs on efficacy and job satisfaction.

Research Design

This research was designed as a qualitative analysis of educator perceptions of the influence of programs focusing on positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture, educator efficacy, and job satisfaction. Specifically, this research was conducted using interviews and response coding using a phenomenological methodology. This design structure was chosen because it allowed for a targeted focus on educator perceptions of the sway these programs have on elements of the working environment. Moreover, the interview format allowed for greater depth in participant responses.

Research Questions

The central research question in this study is "what are educator perceptions of the influence of programs focusing on positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture, educator efficacy, and job satisfaction?" In order to target specific elements of the research, four sub-questions were explored:

Sub-question 1: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture?

Sub-question 2: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on their level of professional efficacy?

Sub-question 3: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on job satisfaction?

Sub-question 4: What elements of positive behavior supports and restorative practices are employed in the educators' schools?

Phenomenological Research

A phenomenological study, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 121). Unlike other studies that may focus on more general elements of educators' work experiences, this study focused only on positive behavior support and restorative practice programs have had on their perceptions of school culture, professional efficacy, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the research focused on common perceptions among the participants, and this focus on universal over individual experiences is best served with a phenomenological model.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to minimize the influence of bias by building competence in data collection methods, collecting and analyzing data in an efficient manner, and presenting findings in a meaningful and understandable way (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Bias is an inherent element of research, but the researcher's actions can limit its influence. To address bias, the researcher must prepare to explain the study without biasing potential participants, appropriately conduct interviews, reflect on the interview experiences and any elements of the interview setting that may influence results, and analyze data as described in the research design.

Population Sample

Participants for this study were chosen using a criterion sampling method. The first criterion for selection was that the educator had to have worked for at least 3 years in a school recently designated a Gold Level Model of Demonstration School by the Tennessee Tiered Supports Center (TSC), formerly known as the Tennessee Behavior Support Project. More specifically, the educator needed to have been working in the school for 3 years, and one of those years needed to be a year in which the school earned the designation. To earn a Model of Demonstration designation at the gold level, schools must submit proof and receive confirmation from TSC that they have appropriately implemented elements of positive behavior supports with fidelity at all three tiers of support. Schools can earn this designation annually, and schools must reapply for designation each year.

The second criterion for selection was that participants must work in schools with established restorative practice programs. While all elements of restorative practice need not be in place, common elements, such as the use of circles and restorative questioning, must be evident in school documentation and practice.

Participants

The participant pool for this study consisted of 12 individuals representing 3 elementary schools from Northeast Tennessee. An administrator from each of the 3 schools was included in the participant pool. To be included, the administrator needed to have been in the position for at least 2 years in which the school was developing and implementing positive behavior supports and restorative practice programs. In one instance, a new administrator was hired at one of the participant schools, so the previous principal, who was involved in the development and implementation of the PBS and restorative practices program at the school before moving on to a

new position, was interviewed instead. The participant pool also included both teachers and school counselors with at least one teacher and one counselor representing each school. Due to a change in staffing, one of the counselors involved in the development and implementation of the programming at one of the elementary schools had already moved to a new school by the time of the interview. Additionally, one of the participating schools were only able to provide access to one teacher, so an additional interview was conducted with a teacher at one of the other two schools. Participants were chosen based on having worked in the participant schools for a minimum of 3 years. The teacher participants were chosen in conference with the school principal to ensure that one of the teachers representing each school was directly involved with the development of the PBS and restorative programs and one was involved solely in classroom implementation. School counselors were chosen to provide a unique perspective on the influence of the programs schoolwide.

Participants were contacted through email to request their participation. Initial contact at each school was through the current principal in an email that outlined the purpose of the study, interview logistics, and potential outcomes. Once the principal agreed to participate and allow participation of other educators in the school, the principal provided guidance regarding potential candidates. Their insight was important to ensure that the two teachers interviewed at each school represented different levels of responsibility related to the PBS and restorative programs. This was done to minimize potential bias that could be created by only interviewing educators directly involved in the development of the programs.

Table 1

Participant Overview

Name	School	Role	Years in Education	Years at Current School	Years Implementing Practices
Grace	1	Principal (previous)	25	5	5
Trisha	1	School Counselor	31	6	5
Kelly	1	3rd Grade Teacher	9	4	4
Pam	1	4th Grade Teacher	16	16	6
Sarah	1	Kindergarten Teacher	9	9	6
Marie	2	Principal	25	5	5
Anna	2	Family Liaison/Certified Counselor	11	11	4
Paisley	2	4th Grade Teacher	11	7	5
Aubrey	3	Principal	15	4	4

		School			
Jason	3	Counselor	13	8	5
		(Previous)			
Andrea	3	Kindergarten	10	9	9
		Teacher			
Lexi	3	2nd Grade	14	14	6
		Teacher			

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data for this study were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interview process was developed based on the work of Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Yin (1994). Participants were guided through the interview using an established interview protocol that included both intro and outro scripts, demographic questions designed to establish rapport, and questions directly related to the purpose of the study. These questions are provided in Appendix A. The 30 – 60 minute interviews were conducted both in-person and remotely. The format for each interview was chosen based on participant preference, which was primarily determined by location and logistical considerations, such as class schedule. When conducted in person, the interviews were recorded using a Zoom H5 microphone with individual microphones for both the interview and the participant. This setup created individual tracks for both parties. Remote interviews were conducted through the Zoom video conferencing platform. Interviews

were recorded through the platform's built-in recording software, which is able to create separate audio tracks for the interviewer and the participant.

Pseudonyms

In order to maintain anonymity in the process, participants were asked to choose their own pseudonyms before the interview began. Allen and Wiles (2015) found that the practice of allowing participants to choose their own pseudonyms has the dual benefit of supporting anonymity and creating a psychological connection between the participant and the study by providing participants with a chance to actively shape the process.

Field Notes

As described in Bogdan and Bilken (1998), field notes were used in both descriptive and reflective capacities. Descriptive notes were taken at the time of the interviews to capture the physical surroundings of the interview conditions, incidents of note that occurred throughout the interview, and any behaviors of interest displayed by the participant. These descriptive notes were also used to support the accuracy and precision of the interview process by capturing either direct quotes or detailed summaries of participant responses.

The reflective notes were more personal. I used these notes to capture my own thoughts and feelings both before, during, and after the interviews. I also included any ideas that I had related to the interview process itself, particularly when these ideas influenced how questions were structured in future interviews in an attempt to add value to the process in future trials.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews were analyzed for themes using inductive coding. Inductive coding, as adaptive from the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990), involves reviewing data to look for common occurrences that seems to represent the same phenomenon. These common occurrences

are called concepts. As the coding process develops, concepts that pertain to the same phenomenon or serve the same general function are grouped into categories, which are higher level and more abstract than concepts themselves. Categories act as the major organizational elements of the study and can be used to identify the elements of greatest importance. Not all concepts identified during analysis will become categories as some common occurrences will exist that do not speak to the larger story being told by the data.

In this study, the data consisted of both transcribed interviews and field notes. Audio files were first transcribed using audio to text software and then reviewed for accuracy manually. These transcribed interviews were then coded using the inductive methodology previously presented with the process consisting of both manual and software-assisted analysis.

Consideration of Bias

As a behavior interventionist in a school that uses positive behavior supports and restorative practices, it was of particular importance to me that precautions were taken to minimize the effect of bias. In order to maintain the integrity of the interview process, steps were taken to ensure accuracy. First, the intro script used in all interviews explained the purpose of the study with a particular focus on the fact that only accurate responses could help shape future developments in similar programs. Participants were also reminded that they were in control of what questions they chose to answer and could end the interview at any time.

Within a week of completing the interview, participants were provided with a copy of the recordings from their individual sessions. These recordings included both audio tracks but came as a single file ordered as recorded. Additionally, participants were asked to review the transcriptions of their individual interviews to ensure that the results accurately represented their intent.

Assessment of Quality and Rigor

To ensure quality and rigor, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were all addressed throughout the study. Issues of credibility were addressed with peer debriefing, data triangulation, and member checks. Peer debriefing occurred through weekly meetings with my dissertation chair to address concerns, share thoughts, and obtain insight into the research process. Data triangulation occurred in the data collection process by ensuring that the experiences of three stakeholder groups, which were administrators, teachers, and counselors, were represented in the data pool. Finally, member checks occurred as participants were asked to review the transcriptions of their interviews to determine accuracy.

Transferability was addressed through purposive sampling. My experience with positive behavior supports and awareness of the fidelity requirements of a Gold Level designation from the Tennessee Tiered Supports Center (2021) helped narrow my search for participants. Participants represent those who have appropriately experienced the process of implementation and application of PBS and restorative practices, and it is reasonable to expect that their results will be transferable to groups in similar situations.

Dependability was addressed through the use of a code-recode strategy and peer examination. To ensure consistency, interview data coded through both electronic and manual methods was recoded using the same methods on two separate occasions. Additionally, both the process and the results were examined by members of the dissertation committee to confirm findings.

Confirmability was addressed through data triangulation and reflective practice. Data triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of representatives of all stakeholder groups to ensure all perspectives were considered when identifying common outcomes. Reflective fields

note and reflection that occurred during peer debriefings also supported confirmability in the research.

Ethical Considerations

To address ethical considerations, all participants in the study were volunteers, and no identifying information was collected. Requests to interview were provided to both the participants and, when applicable, their principals. These requests identified the study's research questions, contained a letter of consent, and contained a copy of the IRB letter of approval to establish the legitimacy of the exercise.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of my phenomenological study involving 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with educators who have experience with implementing positive behavior supports and restorative practices in their schools. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain knowledge of educator perceptions of the use of restorative practices and positive behavior supports in schools, specifically the sway these programs have on school climate and student-to-student interactions. It also expanded the scope of the current literature to focus on educator perceptions of the influence that restorative practices and positive behavior supports have on educator efficacy and job satisfaction. Analysis of these interviews identified seven primary themes. These themes are an understanding of the underlying cause for student behavior, change, common practices of positive behavior supports and restorative practices, benefits for students, benefits for educators, struggles with implementation, and suggestions for implementation. This chapter is organized by theme with pertinent quotes from interviewees included. Additionally, each theme is further explored through the identification of subthemes.

Understanding the Causes of Student Behavior

A theme identified in 10 of the interviews was a greater consideration for and understanding of the underlying motivation behind a student's behavior. This theme was supported by two subthemes: an understanding of the underlying causes of student behavior issues and an increase in student understanding of the feelings and motivations of others.

Finding "The Why"

In their interviews, 10 educators highlighted the importance of taking time to identify the root causes of student behavior. A few of those interviewed identified this process as "finding the why." Respondents indicated that, once they began to consider all the factors that shape student

behavior, they were less likely to respond to behavioral episodes in an accusatory way and were more likely to consider the broader context of the outburst. As Paisley explained, "oftentimes, you are quick to say, 'why did you do that? I can't believe you did that.' The practices really allow time for the educator to ask those deeper questions to see that there's often an underlying issue." To further her point, she added that when a student is involved in a conflict with another student, she is now more likely to look beyond the specific incident to consider the bigger picture. As she shared,

> Maybe something happened at home, so they came into school already mad and upset. This other student didn't really do anything. It's just that they were kind of that punching bag for that other person. It really has allowed me, and I feel like I can speak for some of the others that I work with, to really be able to get to the bottom of the real issue.

Anna identified the benefits of beginning the process by considering student motivations when she said, "if you just start with the first question of what happened, a lot of times that will resolve the issue or just start with affirming statements. 'I see you look frustrated. What happened?' It has just built those relationships." She also suggested that this new approach has helped her and her colleagues move beyond a more traditional mindset regarding student discipline conversations. "I think, you know, we've moved on from that old school of 'why did you do that? You shouldn't have done that. Put that up,' she said, "We're just building relationships. I think it all goes back to that relationship building, and our kids feel like someone cares about them."

Trisha identified the way in which this process can change the dynamic between educators and students when she said, "teachers always care about the students, but I think it takes it to a different level of understanding about why the child is struggling in that particular

grade, in that particular subject, on that particular day, and what maybe you can do to help them. It just opens our eyes a little more to what they're going through." She added,

> I think teachers often get caught up in what they have to get done. I think when they
> know more, hear more, and can learn more about the student and their personal life, it
> helps them to maybe be a little more patient with them.

On a more practical level, Lexi shared that the process not only allows teachers to understand the underlying issues in students' lives but also to gain awareness of their specific behavioral triggers and individual needs. She stated regarding the process, "I feel like we have stronger relationships with our students. I mean we're talking to them. We're figuring out their triggers. Maybe we're also figuring out how to respond to them because there's not a one-size-fits-all." She suggested that one benefit of developing deeper relationships is the increased ability to calm situations before they escalate. She shared, "you have to figure out what works best with that student and build that relationship so that you can deescalate the problem before it happens."

Students Learn to Understand the Feelings and Motivations of Others

A subtheme that appeared in 8 of the interviews was educators identifying an increase in students' ability to understand the feelings and motivations of their peers. Much like their teachers and administrators, students who are trained through the use positive behavior supports and restorative practices showed a greater understanding of fact that classroom conflicts often have roots in deeper issues. This process can also help students develop empathy for one another. As Pam shared,

I think the kids learn a lot about each other. Kind of like, maybe he said this to me and hurt my feelings, but this is why. It gives them a little bit of insight into each other and things that they deal with. I've seen that it creates more of a bond with them. They sympathize more with their peers.

Marie supported this idea when she said,

As we instituted daily circles where kids got to know each other, the idea of "the more I know you, the less likely I am to harm you" really took hold in this building, and the students developed empathy for each other. They know more about one another. That recognize that an issue isn't about what's happening at recess but that it is about different, bigger issue.

This empathy is also able to develop bonds among students from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Jason identified the phenomenon of students with different home lives learning to be more patient with one another when shared,

I feel like kids are starting to realize, "You know, this kid is not raised the same way as me. This kid doesn't have the same home life as me. This kid needs a little bit different help when it comes to how they interact with peers." I think kids give a lot of grace when it comes to kids who are different than them.

Interviews revealed that students were not only more likely to empathize with each other but also to bond over common experiences. Marie shared a powerful example of this phenomenon where a group of girls were involved in conflict with a student experiencing severe trauma. Through the restorative process, the girls were able to gain an appreciation for the underlying cause of the animosity.

I have a child whose family was torn apart through reasons outside of anyone's control. Her older sister became sick with leukemia, and they had to go and spend a lot of time at St. Jude's. Her father was supposed to take care of her. Not all of the children in this family are from the same two biological parents. The three youngest girls were very close, but one of the girls has a different mother than the other two. When the older sibling went to St. Jude's [hospital], the dad who was supposed to watch all of them had a mental break. Things did not go well for him. He was involved in some drug use and some other things, so these children had to go other places so that Mom could be with the sick one. Well, two of the three ended up moving to North Dakota to be with an aunt, and the third one ended up going with their biological mother. The biological mother ended up not being a good custodial parent, so that child moved in with an individual designated by the mother, which was still not with the other two girls. It's been really rough for them and hard, but the girls have come back. In one of the circles, one of the girls was talking about how hard it has all been and communicating how you should be kind to other people because you never know what's going to happen. This girl shared what was happening in her life and divulged all of this stuff that's been sitting on her. The rest of the girls in the circle just looked at her and went, "we didn't know." They are fourth graders, so they are highly emotional, which led to sobs everywhere and hugging. We haven't had a problem out of that girl group since because they realized what they didn't know.

She shared a similar experience involving a group of boys who were in conflict but did not know that they shared similar a background in which each of them was being raised by a single parent due to the incarceration of their other parent. As the boys were engaging in a restorative circle,

one of them mentioned this, and for the first time, they began to see each other as allies. Marie shared the feelings of the boys as, "I get you. I see you. I know what it's like to have to call my dad because I can't see him, or I have to go to a jail to see him." This revelation became a connector among that group of boys who are now much closer.

Anna also suggested that students often bond over shared experiences.

Then the connections are just automatic. It's just there. That has happened with [parents being in] jail, with domestic violence, with substance abuse, with homelessness, and with not having food. Those connections just kind of flow naturally. We may start with cussing, hitting, or something, but it's naturally just gone deeper with a lot of the conversations. The more they've built those relationships and started talking they're learning more about each other, and they're like, "Oh my gosh! There's so much more to you. Why am I going to hurt you? You're experiencing what I'm experiencing. You're just like me."

Finally, restorative conversations were used to develop friendship but also to deepen them. As Aubrey shared,

I had two students not getting along today. They really wanted to be friends. They just couldn't figure out how to be friends together, so we had to sit down and have a restorative conversation to move that friendship further in hopes that, in the coming days, they work through their differences and understand what the expectations are of that friendship.

This experience suggests that the students who are taught restorative practices can leverage these skills to improve their peer relationships over time.

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Change

Another common theme addressed in interviews was the idea of change. This theme was present in some form in all 12 interviews. In one instance, Grace suggested that change was the fundamental element of the implementation when she stated,

> I don't know that you can in my thinking how you could shift school culture and climate unless changes are made. Culture is our belief system and out vision. The climate is our behaviors. You can't shift culture unless behaviors change, and we can't shift behaviors unless we are taught to do it a different way.

The change process suggested in the interviews occurred in both practices used to support students as well as in the mindset required to effectively implement restorative practices and positive behavior supports. In fact, the change in practices used throughout the process was viewed as more an extension of the change in mindset. This change in mindset referred to the idea of practitioners transitioning from a more traditional approach to behavior where individual incidents are either rewarded or punished based on individual events to a more holistic view of behavioral events through which student behaviors are considered in the larger context of events and experiences that have shaped their perspective. Kelly addressed this shift in thinking when she said,

> It taught me how to be conversational with my kids and not to just try to take care of the problem at the moment but to understand my students. It improves my satisfaction that we have a good relationship, and I'm not just trying to manage the chaos. I'm building a relationship with that student.

Paisley also spoke about the idea of how the mindset required when implementing restorative practices is considerably different from a more traditional view of behavior. She stated,

> Oftentimes you think, if there's been a major situation, that there should be that instant consequence for that behavior, but with the restorative practices it's more of talking through it. If eventually it lends itself to having a consequence of some sort to make it right, then that does happen, but I think that's been an adjustment piece a little bit from previous school systems I've been with and how that has been managed.

She continued this line of thinking when she said,

> I definitely feel like you have to have an open mind and I know that. You know, I'm pretty flexible and change doesn't bother me. Being in a school where it wasn't present beforehand and then was implemented school-wide, I was open to that change and was willing to embrace it. I think that's probably one of the biggest things, especially if you've been in a school or a previous system that hasn't used it. It is important to have that open mindset because, at first, it is a whole change in mindset as far as talking through issues and not falling back into "Why did you do this? You shouldn't have done this. This is your punishment or you're a consequence." I think just having that open mind to that idea that it is going to feel different. It is going to seem different, but there are benefits that come from it.

Common Practices of Positive Behavior Supports and Restorative Practices

Another theme that appeared in all 12 interviews was a discussion of the various practices used in schools that implement positive behavior supports. The most discussed practices were circles, direct instruction of behavior, the use of restorative questions, and the use of either

behavior contracts or a check-in/check-out system for students with more prominent behavior issues. Other practices mentioned where the creation and use of a behavior interventionist position and the use of targeted supports for students in Tier 3 who exhibit the greatest need for behavioral support. One realization that was made during the interview process was that, since all educators interviewed implement both positive behavior supports and restorative practices, some interviewees would group all practices together and would identify a restorative practice as a positive behavior support or a practice associated with positive behavior supports as a restorative practice.

Circles

The most mentioned practice in the interviews was the use of circles. This practice was mentioned explicitly in 10 of the 12 interviews, and educators suggested that the use of circles served a number of functions. The first was a daily check-in for students for both emotional and practical reasons. As Andrea shared,

> Every morning, we start off with our morning meeting, and during that morning meeting is when we really talked about things. We always start off by saying, "good morning." If we have time, I'll have someone say something positive to another classmate. That's also when we really talked about our behavioral habits and how we can practice those habits.

Sarah provided additional perspective on the practical use of circles to teach behavioral and social strategies when she said, "Our restorative circles that we do daily. Especially in kindergarten, having circle time in the morning [is important]. We kind of go through how we act at school, how we treat others, and things like that every morning." She continued with this idea when she shared, "I go over classroom expectations and school-wide expectations every single morning to the point where, I mean, they know exactly how our morning's going to start."

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Trish suggested circles were being used in her school to address student's emotional and social issues.

> The restorative circles in the classroom where the students sit in the morning. Kind of a morning meeting type of thing. You sit in a circle, and the students could talk about something that's bothering them. You can have a question or an open-ended sentence that they finish. That kind of gets things started and often times leads into more information. I feel like it's a really good thing because the kids get to know each other, know where each other is coming from, and know were each other are coming from on that given day.

Paisley also shared that she used daily circles for emotional and social reasons. She explained, "We circle every morning, and I will be honest. That is more for just building the community and building trust within the classroom. I have seen a huge difference since starting those circles in the morning."

Pam was not only supportive of the idea of using circles for social and emotional support, but she also suggested that teachers set aside time each day specifically to engage in circle time. She explained,

> It gives me insight. It provides that time set aside for the restorative circles to where you have time to share. They have time to share even if it's not necessarily a bad thing. It might be a good thing and something to celebrate. Many times, you get caught up in the go-go of the day where you have to get this done, this done, and this done that you don't set aside time for those things, but it's important to know about your students in order to interact with them appropriately, to know what triggers their behaviors, or what could be

triggering a behavior (positive or negative). For me, it's a scheduled time that I have with my kids. It lets me get to know them better.

Kelly also suggested that making sure to engage in circles each day helped to prevent behavioral issues from escalating. She shared,

I think daily, restorative circles work really well because you're bringing up issues with students before they become issues, and you're teaching them how to deal with those issues. Everybody slides back on doing them every now and then, and you can tell whenever you're not doing them because students suddenly have issues they don't know how to handle. That causes arguments or more behavioral issues to arise.

Another use for circles described by interviewees was the use of restorative circles with more structure to address conflict or incidents where someone has hurt another. As Marie stated,

We also have done in the past, and will again when needed, do the most structured conversations. We can do the ones where it's ambiguous, but we also do ones [higher level circles more like closely linked to traditional restorative justice circles] where we've had family members come in. We've had bus drivers come in. We've had community members at the meeting. We've done all of that.

Paisley explained how the use of circles for restorative conversations has supported students in her school.

I will say I do feel like it does allow the other person [in a conflict] to feel or to know how that person feels. I mean, it's more of just, "how did this make you feel when you are doing this? What were your feelings?" I do feel that, from an emotional standpoint and really understanding the emotions of others, it has been a big thing.

Grace expanded on this idea by describing the value of restorative circles for school administrators and sharing how administrators can implement them.

> Administrators should spend time in circles as a participant and a learner. They can use circles to support or solve complex family crisis situations. Also, adding the restorative conference following all office discipline referrals was a key process to shifting the experience and resetting the opportunity for students and teachers.

Direct Instruction of Behavior

Providing direct instruction of behavioral expectations was another common practice mentioned in the interviews with a total of eight interviewees suggesting the practice. Along with the time educators spent teaching and reviewing behavioral expectations during circles, it was also suggested that these lessons were being taught and reinforced schoolwide. This was accomplished through the creation and implementation of focused, behavioral lesson plans and through the use of posters highlighting expectations that were hung around the school. As Marie shared,

> We have posters all over the building that teach those expectations. My leadership team has made lessons where we strategically teach all that stuff. We strategically teach the expectations at the beginning of the school year so that there's a common language all the way through our building and everybody knows those things.

Grace also emphasized the benefit of using visual cues when developing the language and practices of the program. She offered,

> You have to apply those visual fields in every classroom and then change environments that reflect the verbiage that we're using. They're little people, okay. Really in K-12, they

have to see it and not just hear it. They have to sit and practice, and we model and act in ways that are intentional. None of this work will evolve unless we are intentional.

Marie also added that lessons should be adapted for students at different points in the developmental process. She explained,

Depending on the grade level, they either introduce the concept, reinforce the concept, or extend the concept. My older students, because they've had it now for around three years, receive extension lessons that focus more on empathy, identifying their own emotions, and how to work with people who are in various emotional states.

Grace provided further insight into the idea of creating a schoolwide system and indicated that all of the work involved did not need to be from scratch because of commercial products already available. She shared,

There are lesson plans that are available that address restorative practices. As principals, school leaders, and teacher leaders, we can't give the staff "one more thing to do" without the resources. The process should be very systematic in the approach, including professional learning over a period of time and not one-and-done. [They need] support with the leadership team in the room to coach teachers who are struggling with a practice or resistant to the change so that they understand that this is the way we're going to do business for students. It is also important to provide those lesson plans. They can be purchased. They have videos linked to them. They work for kindergarten through sixth grade.

Another element of direct instruction involved modeling appropriate behavior in both classroom lessons and in the personal actions of each educator. As Lexi explained,

We kind of focus on building positive relationships to make sure that students feel safe

and comfortable. There's a lot of modeling. We like to think about preventing the

behavior before the behavior happens, so we do a lot of modeling with that.

She also suggested that this instruction is also present in her response to student behavior in the

classroom. "If the behavior does happen, it's not necessarily punishment," she said, "but talking

with them, modeling, and showing them ways that they can handle their reactions and their

emotions differently." She added,

The modeling seems to work, particularly them seeing what a conflict resolution looks

like. I mean, for a lot of our kids, all they see at home is the screaming and the yelling or

the throwing, so for them to actually see how you can handle conflict in a different way, I

feel is good for them.

Andrea added that educators themselves are responsible for modeling the expectations

and norms in their own practice. As she explained it, "we all try to practice that [the restorative

practices and LIM habits] even the teachers. It's not just something that students do. I have to

know the habits and practice those just to be a positive role model for students."

Restorative Questions

The use of restorative questions was mentioned in 7 of the interviews. This practice was

connected to the direct instruction element of the programming, and this practice was often

supported through the use of a card provided to all educators with a copy of the restorative

questions on it. Trisha shared that she used the restorative questions regularly and stated,

I do like also that there's a card with the [restorative] questions. They are guided

questions that we ask students when something does happen. I think they help students

understand what they did and how it affected someone else. I feel like that's a really good way for them to understand "what I do actually affects others" and how it affects them, and it gives the other person a chance to share how what you did to me affected me.

Anna also mentioned the use of a card with the restorative questions on it, and she felt that the card helped provide a sense of uniformity that helped calm situations. She described,

They know that they have a voice and they're going to get a chance to say their side of the story. They know that adults may pull out their card and go with those four [restorative] questions, and they have a voice. I think the common language, the predictability, and being a part of being a problem solver has been huge with our culture. Not only our little ones, but our adults too.

This idea also appeared in Jason's interview when he said,

When a kid does something that requires restorative practice, whether they get in trouble or are just refusing to do work or whatever, teachers have a card or a worksheet kind of go through [the restorative process]. It's not just the school counselor at school. Administration even down to the teachers and teachers' aides know the policy and the steps to go through restorative practice to see, "what's the problem? How can we fix that problem for today? If this happens again in the future, what can the student do in order to have a different outcome and to make a different choice?"

Educators also addressed the phenomenon of using the restorative questions as an element of other behavioral supports. Grace suggested that the use of restorative questions was helpful both in combination with more traditional elements of discipline and as a component of the experience provided in a school's calming space. She explained, "We then used the

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restorative questions when students were in trouble. We also used those questions to guide their thinking when they were in the calm space after an event had occurred." Aubrey supported the idea of using restorative questions in a variety of situations when she shared, "We use restorative questioning and practices anytime we have a behavioral incident or a conflict between students."

Breaks and Calming Spaces

The use of breaks and or calming spaces was addressed by 7 of the educators interviewed. This practice presents in a variety of forms from students being provided an active break away from the classroom to the creation of specific spaces outside of the classroom for break to the creation of calming spaces inside the classroom where students can calm and reset themselves without exiting the room. Anna described how the practice was used in her school when she shared,

> We have Tier Calls, which just means our teachers can call if they need someone to push into their classroom or if our students need a break from the classroom with the goal being that they eventually move back in. A Tier 1 call means we need someone just to push in the classroom, and a Tier 2 call means a student just needs a break to come out of the classroom. Maybe they need to walk around the track outside or just take a break in another room and then talk through whatever's happened or just get a breather.

Trisha shared her school's practices where students use visual cues to identify the need for a break. She explained, "We used a color-coding system where if a child needs a break, they could show that card and take a minute or take it, you know, take some time when they feel like they're getting worked up or whatever." Pam, who works in the same school as Trisha, also identified the calming space as an important tool for some students when she said,

[We have the] reset room. I personally haven't had to use that a lot, but I know that it can be helpful when you have extensive behavior situations with students who may just not be able to help their actions at the time.

Expanding on the idea of having a calm space outside the classroom, Jason suggested the use of a sensory room. He explained, "We developed a sensory room at our school to allow students to have a break from being over stimulated whether that is with peers, with schoolwork, or whatever that may be.

Some educators volunteered the idea of creating calming spaces inside the classrooms themselves so that students could get a break without having to leave the physical space. Anna provided some insight into the use of calming spaces inside the classroom. She described them by sharing,

We have what we've called Lions' Dens because we're the [school name] Lions, so we've made little lions' dens [in the classroom] where students can take five minutes to just kind of sit over and decide if they have some tools that they can use to self-regulate.

Andrea also shared her experience with classroom calming spaces in her kindergarten class. She explained,

Calm corner is a big one too. I have a corner of my room where, if someone is upset, mad, sad, or they just need a minute, they can go there and there's things like Play-Doh, little puzzles, stress balls, just like things that there. They can just take a minute.

CICO and Behavior Contracts

A practice mentioned in six of the interviews was the use of either check-in/check-out (CICO) programs with students who needed additional support or the use of behavior contracts

through which teachers checked in with students throughout the day to discuss behavioral goals and progress. Kelly shared her experience with behavioral contracts when she shared, "We have behavior contracts with some students. These contracts are tied to a points system through which students can earn rewards for their good behavior." She further explained the value that the contracts can have for the students who need them. She explained,

> I also think that our behavior contracts work really well where we have students that we are watching for behavior. When we do have a student who's on a behavior contract, it's very focused. It's not 10 things that they need to work on. It's specific goals that are specific to that child that you can go over with them in the morning and say, "remember that this is what we're working towards today or for each chunk of the day," and you help them reach that goal. It [the process] brings to the forefront of your mind that you're helping that student to reach a specific goal, and it also brings to the forefront of their mind that they've got to work on their goals. That's one of my favorite things that we do.

She added,

> I really encourage teachers who have a student who is a consistent behavior problem to discuss that with the student every day and to discuss whatever their goal is every day. It's going to help you as a teacher to encourage them, and it's going to help them be more aware of what they need to work on. Instead of you just reacting to the problem, you're discussing it ahead of time and working together. It's not a reaction. It's being proactive.

Jason continued this line of thinking and also provided insight into the ability of the practice to motivate students to take on more responsibility.

> We do behavior charts for kids, and teachers fill it out throughout the day. For the older kids, the chart is their responsibility to get filled out. Depending on the student, they have

different goals and different points requirements. Whoever the check-in/check-out person is, they usually offer some sort of a weekly reward or bi-weekly reward for the student to work towards. Eventually, it kind of gets to the point where we've even worked with some kids long enough that they realize, for example, if there are 20 possible points and we start with a goal of 10, those students want to get 15 after a couple weeks. To them, 10 isn't considered a good day anymore, and they want to be able to get 15 points out of a possible 20 on goals such as respecting the teacher, turning in schoolwork, and being kind to peers. They really want to challenge themselves, which is the whole point of it. [We want] that intrinsic motivation instead of doing it because you wanted a bi-weekly reward or anything like that. Check-in/check-out is really good.

Finally, Lexi identified the consistency inherent in the practice as being beneficial to students.

The check-in/check-out program works by having that consistent person [to meet with] because, again, a lot of our students don't have the consistency of, you know, Mom, Dad, or whoever. It could be that they are wherever with whoever. Just that consistency of the same person every day checking on them and making sure that they're ok.

One issue that did arise related to CICO is that the practice benefits some students more than others. As Pam shared, "the behavior contracts I think are successful dependent on the student. I don't think it's successful for every student, but I've seen huge success in some and in others not so much."

Behavior Interventionist

The addition of a behavior interventionist to the staff was mentioned in five of the interviews. Grace mentioned the addition of such a position as part of her school's multi-year

plan for implementation of PBS and restorative practices. She explained, "In the third year, as part of restorative practices, we also added a full-time intervention position by shifting Title 1 funds. We put that position in place to continue training and application of restorative practices in all the classrooms." She added,

> The [behavior interventionist] position we added gave the coaching support teachers needed to be able to do that well. I would say that we also need to think about the coaching piece that you can't just tell people, "Go do it." A principal doesn't have time to coach all that, so [implementers need to consider] what that support will look like for teachers.

Aubrey also commented on the value of her school's behavior interventionist, "We've had our behavior interventionist this year, and she is very well-versed in strategies. She has taught me a lot about how to interact with students and how to deescalate situations by using strategies that redirect their attention." Finally, Jason spoke to the value of a behavior interventionist to provide timely support to teachers who need additional support with more complex situation or when working with a student with who they are having trouble connecting. He explained,

> I think the addition of behavior interventionist in the schools has allowed teachers to have more behavioral curriculum at their disposal. If teachers have questions, in 24 hours, the behavior intervention can have some assignments, activities, and strategies that the teacher can do with the student in the classroom that can help the teacher connect with that student.

Tier 3 Supports

The final practice mentioned with any regularity was the use of supports for students who qualified for Tier 3 behavior supports. While only four interview subjects mentioned these

supports specifically, the supports provide assistance to students at the highest level of need. Anna shared her school's Tier 3 supports when she said, "We have individual [therapy] and small groups for students who are on Tier 3 who need that more intensive support." Lexi also mentioned supports designed specifically for students who needed higher levels of support. She explained, "For Tier 3 students, we have some Lunch Bunch groups, and we have some one-on-one intervention that takes place with those students." Aubrey also addressed practices in place to support students in Tier 3 when she explained, "we have much more structured interventions with small groups, break cards, Functional Behavior Assessments, structured behavior plans, and a sensory room." Finally, Jason mentioned a practice his school had in place to support students at the highest level of behavioral need when he offered, "We have a classroom in our school for behavior modification."

Benefits for Students

Benefits for students when implementing positive behavior supports and restorative practices was another theme that emerged from interviews. In fact, educators from all 12 interviews identified one or more benefits that students receive from using PBS and restorative practices. The most commonly addressed benefits were social growth, consistency, and deeper relationships.

Social Growth

Social growth and improved social interactions were mentioned in 11 interviews. These benefits were seen in both social interactions among students and social interactions between educators and students. In terms of educator and student interactions, Sarah shared her insight with the practices creating a more respectful culture. She explained,

I think it has helped definitely build a respectful culture between student and educator. I think students know what is expected, and our educators in our school make those clear expectations. I think it's definitely made a respectful culture.

Marie described this process as a shift from students trying to guess what educators wanted to hear to a point where they shared more openly.

When we first implemented restorative practices, it was really difficult for our kids because they would say what they thought the adult wanted to hear, so it was a lot of "I'm sorry…..? I won't do that again....?.....?. Then, once a trust had been formed and built from the morning circles, knowing their teacher, and knowing that they can trust the teacher to listen to them and take what they say with importance, they were willing to put other things forward.

The benefit of this social growth also appears in interactions that students have with their peers. As Kelly explained,

When it comes to student-to-student interactions, it has helped students be able to have conversations with each other and learn how to work out issues between one another. It has helped them learn how a conversation actually should sound and how to work out any issues that they may have. I think it also helps students be aware of how their behavior and the things that they do affect other students. The restorative practice helps teachers guide those conversations and helps us pull attention to their behavior and how it affects other people around them.

Paisley also suggested that the experiences allowed by implementing PBS and restorative practices positively affected students' social growth. She offered,

Everybody has a voice. Everybody's voice is heard, and truly, in doing those [circles], it really has made a difference in the students connecting with one another, finding common ground, and really being able to share how they're feeling in a safe space.

Honestly, it's just really them being able to see how they made that other person feel. I don't think when they are so quick to react, they really stop to think on "my gosh, I literally made this person feel all of these things." When that other student is able to say, "You made me feel hurt. You made me feel anger, and it reminded me of another time when this happened," it really just allows them to see that they have really hurt of person that that care about. As far as the student-to-student, I've seen a huge improvement just in being able to share how someone else's actions made them feel and that they don't appreciate it, and the other person saying, "I'm sorry that really wasn't my intention." I really think it has been beneficial to student-to-student interactions.

Aubrey identified the value of the process being primarily in the importance placed on communication. She also suggested that the process can lead students to take more responsibility in their relationships. She shared,

I feel like restorative practices help students see the value in communication. I think we have seen students try to take ownership of those conversations with each other. They're much more willing now to try to solve the problem on their own instead of getting an adult to come help them all the time. Obviously, there are instances where they have to get an adult. We want them to do that, but they're starting to lean heavily on their problem-solving skills.

This theme of students learning to take ownership over their relationships, act as leaders, and hold their peers accountable was another pervasive element of student social growth. Grace highlighted the ability of positive behavior supports and restorative practices to lead students to take ownership over their relationships when she observed,

> As we started the third year, we had a sixth-grade student who moved back to the building. She had been very busy in fourth grade, in trouble often in fourth grade, and very inappropriate in her language and conversations. She moved away in her fifth-grade year and came back in sixth, which was our third year of implementation of PBS. At one point, we are in an assembly in the gymnasium, and one of the sixth-grade students stood up to present, and she started to make fun of that student and give him a hard time. My assistant at the time and I, both of us, made a bee line to that student, and before we could get to her the students shut her down and stopped it [the taunting]. They said, "We don't act like that. We are kind and respectful. That's not how we treat each other. We don't act like that anymore."
>
> I thought that was powerful when that happened. It was at the beginning of the year. It was before we had all the test data at the end of the year that was also affirming the work, but it was evident based on that event that the students believed they were leaders and that they were kind and that they were respectful and responsible and safe. They were holding each other accountable.

Sarah was also quick to identify student growth as leaders as noticeable change in her students. She explained,

I feel like it has helped with accountability with students. I think it has created leaders in our school. I think some, you know, some of our kids, the positive influence I see from some of the older kids, you know. If they see somebody doing something they shouldn't, they can say, "Hey, that's, that's a rule. That's something that we don't do here." [They have] accountability for each other. It's a big change.

Jason also spoke to idea of students maturing in how they interact with peers who may not react to situations in the same way that they do. He shared,

I feel like students have really learned to care and treat other students with more respect. I feel like kids are starting to realize, "You know, this kid is not raised the same way as me. This kid doesn't have the same home life as me. This kid needs a little bit different help when it comes to how they interact with peers." I think kids give a lot of grace when it comes to kids who are different than them. I think it's been a learning experience because the school I'm at, you have kids who may not have stable home environments, but you also have kids who come from much more supportive families. The first time they [students from more supportive families] saw some behaviors and actions from a kid who struggles, they were kind of shocked, and now they are wanting to help those students. They're not scared of the student who is throwing a fit in class. Instead, they see these things and they tend to coach, encourage, and take that leadership role on to help that student.

Consistency of Practices and Language

Another student benefit mentioned in nine of the interviews was that PBs and restorative practices provide a consistent framework of practices and language that support students. Marie identified one example of this consistency in practice when she shared,

That is the expectation, so our kids know [the process]. It's so ingrained in them now that, when something happens, they just say, "Okay. I'm ready. Here's what happened." Like, they just go right into the questions because they know exactly what's going to be asked. It helps tremendously because, if they are here, it doesn't matter what adult approaches them they know what's going to happen, and they immediately deescalate the minute they see either the card or hear someone just say, "what happened?" They know that they're safe, and that someone will listen to them because they know they're going to follow that script.

Anna also identified this consistency of language and practice as a benefit for students when she shared,

With restorative practice, the language is the same and things have become predictable. When I say predictable, I mean that our kids, when something happens, know the first question is going to be "What happened.?" It's not. "Why did you do that?" or any kind of scolding or negative. They know that they have a voice and they're going to get a chance to say their side of the story. They know that adults may pull out their card and go with those four [restorative] questions, and they have a voice. I think the common language, the predictability, and being a part of being a problem solver has been huge with our culture. Not only our little ones, but our adults too.

I love our students and how they use the language that the adults use. I think we all have a common language both with using the Zones of Regulation and restorative practices. Where we use the zones, our students, our parents, and our teachers will all say, "I'm in the red zone." Our younger ones may not have the words to say, I'm angry. I feel angry because....," but they can say, "I'm in the red zone," Then we can go from there.

"Ok Why are you in the red zone? I'm angry because someone did something." We're using common language from our tiny ones to our older ones, and I love when our parents come in saying that they are in the Red Zone because so-and-so left their stuff. It has become a culture.

Finally, Lexi shared that the consistency of the practices made it easier for her students to understand what was expected of them and to know what options they have to respond. She explained,

I just feel like we're stronger in that sense of building the relationships and having that guide or that expectation to know that we're not going to explode at one another. There are other ways to deal with our emotions and our behaviors.

Deeper Relationships

The last of the major student benefits addressed in the interviews, which is the development of deeper relationships, was suggested by 10 of the educators. Trisha addressed this benefit when she shared,

I think this is helping kids be aware that there may be more to it [peer conflict] than just something maybe I did to a friend. It's maybe something happened at home. They're getting to know each other, their home life, their situations, maybe what's causing them to act the way that they're acting. I think it just takes it [understanding] to a deeper level, and it takes friendships to a deeper level as well.

Marie's experiences supported Trisha's assertion. She explained,

I think our students view themselves as part of a family. I think they feel very, very connected. When I started here five years ago, these kids didn't know each other, and they

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could not care less about each other. They were out for them and there's. It did not matter. As we instituted daily circles where kids got to know each other and what they talked about the idea of the more I know you the less likely I am to harm you really took hold in this building, and the students developed empathy for each other. They know more about one another. That recognize that an issue isn't about what's happening at recess but that it is about different, bigger issue. They just have more empathy for one another. Our students are more willing to listen and talk to one another. They are more willing to give each other an opportunity to be heard and to speak. They do better at taking turns in conversation, especially about things that are difficult.

Similarly, Paisley shared her experience with the development of deeper relationships in her classroom when she stated,

I think it gets back to what I was just saying. I really do feel like I am able to dig deeper and have a better understanding of, you know, what my students are thinking and how they're feeling because oftentimes, like I said, I mean, it really doesn't have anything to with the issue at the moment. I feel like the practices have allowed me to have a better understanding of my students and have allowed me to really be able to get to the bottom of an issue, pretty quickly, just using the questions that come along with the restorative practices. I feel like it has built a deeper bond and a better sense of community within my classroom for the students and myself.

Finally, Aubrey provided a succinct analysis of the affect using PBS and restorative practices has had in her school when she observed, "I would just say that we have seen significant improvements in relationships throughout the building."

Benefits for Educators

The next major theme to surface from the interviews was educator benefits. In all 12 of the interviews, at least one benefit for educators in schools that implement positive behavior supports and restorative practices was mentioned. This theme consisted of four subthemes: an increased number of tools for supporting students, better relationships with students, increased job satisfaction associated with a more positive work environment, and increased confidence in the ability to help students.

Increased Number of Tools for Supporting Students

The most commonly provided educator benefit, which was suggested in 10 of the 12 interviews, was an increase in the number of tools available for educators to support students. In many cases, this was expressed as allowing for a "bigger toolbox" when working with students. Pam addressed her experience with having access to more practices and supports, such as a calming space, when she shared,

> It was huge because I felt supported. I didn't feel like I had to figure out how to handle a behavior in the classroom with all the other kids. I had support. I could send the kid to the reset room if that was appropriate, but it wasn't a punishment. It allowed me to continue on with the rest of my class, and then they had time to refocus.

> I just I feel like it's been super helpful. I mean being here 16 years. I've kind of gone through the ups and downs of behavior at our school, and it got pretty bad there for a while. After putting these into place and especially after doing them consistently for a few years, I can see the decline of issues that we're having with behavior. Let me put that in different way. We don't have as many issues I don't think. Not to say we don't have any. You're going to, but we don't have as many. The ones that we have I feel like the

teachers feel supported, which before was kind of a huge factor. We just felt like we kind of had to deal with it and didn't really have any other options, so this provides options. I wasn't feeling as defeated like, "I don't know what else to do" in a situation that you've tried multiple things but nothing's working.

Kelly suggested a similar journey in her experience before and after implementing PBS and restorative practices. She observed,

Whenever I first started teaching, I had a lot of behavior issues, and I just felt like I never had control. I felt like I didn't know how to talk to my students and diffuse situations or calm them down. I didn't know who to go to. I didn't know who to ask, and that was in a different school. When I came to a system that was already in place, it taught me how to be conversational with my kids and not to just try to take care of the problem at the moment but to understand my students. It improves my satisfaction that we have a good relationship, and I'm not just trying to manage the chaos. I'm building a relationship with that student.

Marie continued this line of thinking and applied it to the educators in her school when she explained,

I think it has given teachers tools and a much better toolbox to address problematic behavior in a way that is constructive and is solution-focused. It honors the ability to solve a problem, especially with children who come from traumatic backgrounds and experiences. It allows for teachers to know that they're being heard, and they can see the progress in students as they process missteps in their choices of behavior.

Insights from Aubrey suggested that the benefits to educators were not limited to classroom teachers but also extended to administrators. She explained,

> I feel like I have more resources to provide staff when they have challenging situations. I'm feeling more like a coach alongside of our staff, and I think that has been powerful. I've even been able to teach some of our fifth grade morning meeting lessons using our new curriculum and have married that with our Leader in Me work. It's been very powerful to build my toolbox.

Better Relationships with Students

Another educator benefit, which was addressed in nine of the interviews was an improved relationship with students. Much of the conversation around this benefit was addressed in the previous discussions related to the change in relationships that students experience when schools implement PBS and restorative practices and the deeper relationships that students develop because those student benefits are often shared with the educators that they support. Trisha provided her perspective on how the process of implementation can create better relationships as teachers are able to shift from a focus on the work students do to the people that they are. She explained,

> I think teachers often get caught up in what they have to get done, and I think when they know more, they hear more, and they can learn more about the student and their personal life, it helps them to maybe be a little more patient with them. The relationship becomes a much, much better relationship and there's more [to it]. Teachers always care about the students, but I think it takes it again to a different level of understanding about why the child is struggling in that particular grade, in that particular subject, on that particular day

and what maybe you can do to help them? It just opens her eyes a little more to what they're going through.

Kelly suggested that educators benefit when students begin to understand that their actions affect the experience of all people in the school. She disclosed,

I think, from the other side of that issue, it helps the students to understand how their behavior affects educators, affects their job, and affects how I teach. It also builds our relationship because they know that I know about them, and it opens up conversation. The restorative questions help guide our conversation, and it just builds a relationship which improves behavior overall.

Lexi added that the process adds a new level of respect to the relationship between student and educator. She observed,

Well, obviously, when you build those relationships, I feel there's more respect between you and the student. Having that respect cuts down on some of the behavior issues. I just feel like we're stronger in that sense of building the relationships and having that guide or that expectation to know that we're not going to explode at one another.

Increased Job Satisfaction Associated with a More Positive Work Environment

The next educator benefit expressed in the interviews was increased job satisfaction, which was generally associated with working in a more positive and supportive work environment. This subtheme emerged from nine of the interviews. Lexi provided the most concise explanation when she shared, "Obviously when you don't have the behavior issues, it's more enjoyable to come to work, and you're not dreading walking through the door. Like I said,

you're building those relationships, and you become a family." This idea was supported by Trisha who shared,

> It's a much happier place to be [since implementation]. I feel like this school is much......it feels more family-oriented. It's definitely always been a very caring school for sure, but I do feel like that having this knowledge and working with the students in this way just increases our love and care for each other and just makes it a happier place. Much happier place.

Sarah shared that she experienced increased job satisfaction even when thought some days can still be difficult. She explained,

> This is a place that, when I wake up in the morning, I'm excited. I'm excited. I know what my day is going to be like. Not every day is perfect. I mean, there are still days that, you know, I get frustrated. Not everybody's perfect. Every single day, kids are not perfect. Students and we adults are not perfect. I'm not saying it's all sunshine and sparkles, but I love coming and doing what I do every day.

Marie identified her ability to use positive behavior supports and restorative practices to support her students' growth as one of the sources of her increased job satisfaction. She clarified,

> I have satisfaction on one hand because I know the children who are leaving my care and my school are better human beings than they were when they came and not just because of their reading ability or their ability to compute mathematical things. It's because they have empathy. They have understanding. They have the ability to communicate and solve problems.

Jason suggested that his satisfaction has grown because his fellow educators have a better understanding of his role and what he experiences in his job. He disclosed that this understanding has led to increased support for the work that he is doing and his role in the larger school community.

I'd say that it has greatly improved my job satisfaction. I think it has allowed staff to really, fully understand what my job looks like on a daily basis and what type of kids are coming into my classroom. It's also good to have support to not feel like I have to run around and see every kid immediately because there is some staff there who can hold down the fort until I can get back and think of everything that needs to be taken care of. Yeah, it has made my job less stressful. It has made my job more appreciated amongst the staff because they see, as a school counselor, what I deal with and that there are kids who come from just really bad situations and have lots and lots of drama.

Finally, Grace shared a story about one of the teachers in her school who, despite initial reluctance, was able to find great value in the practices.

One of the teachers later said that restorative practices where the thing where she was like, "This is ridiculous. This is not going to work." She was on the leadership team. "I can't believe you're making us do one more thing." She later she said that was the one thing that shifted the culture school-wide.

Increased Confidence

The final educator benefit addressed relatively commonly among the interviews was increased educator confidence. This idea was addressed in six of the interviews with all three

administrators interviewed addressing the issue from either a personal perspective or in a reflection of improved practice among their staff.

Aubrey offered that, as a principal, that implementation of positive behavior supports and restorative practices has given her more confidence in her ability to handle a situation and also in her ability to take a more supportive role in situations where she might have once tried to immediately take control. She explained,

> I have picked up a lot of tools over the last couple of years and really refined my ability to deescalate a situation. I didn't feel as confident before when walking into a situation. I kind of felt like I needed to be the one to come in and save the day, and that's not really where I see my role anymore. I now see when a student is escalated like that it's my job to step in help deescalate and help problem solve. I think it's just a different mindset of how to approach conflict. Even if it's between a student and a teacher or a student and another student, I just feel much more equipped to handle some of those things. We've had our behavior interventionist this year, and she is very well-versed in strategies, and she has taught me a lot about how to interact with students and how to deescalate situations by using strategies that redirect their attention. Just lots of lots of tools in my toolbox now that I did not have before we started this journey.

Grace shared a story of how consistent implementation of the practices and expectations, as well as additional support options offered through the program, helped support the growth of a teacher who initially struggled with students who were being disrespectful.

> That particular teacher would [in the beginning] cry and get very angry and was not comfortable speaking to students when they were talking to her in a disrespectful way.

The teacher would primarily want to send students to the office instead of taking ownership of the classroom and saying, "You're not talking to me that way. You're not going to be disrespectful. You can sit, and I'm going to call for support." This teacher also began to find their voice and recognize that they were going to tell students who they were expected to be. We are respectful here. It was good. It was that common language that made a big difference.

Confidence stemming from knowing what to do when situations arise was a theme in Anna's interview as well. She shared,

I feel better about it. I feel like I know that, regardless of what the situation is, I know I'm going to go in and start with the questions. I'm going to acknowledge how students are feeling. I just know I have a protocol of what I'm doing. I know the students expect something from me, and I'm going to give it to them consistently every time. I know what I'm doing, and the kids know what to expect from me. It makes me feel more confident in what I'm doing.

Finally, Sarah expressed her feelings on the issue by suggesting that the version of herself that began in her first year of teaching would be quite proud of the progress that she has made. She clarified,

When I look back on it, it's kind of a little embarrassing to think back to my first year teaching as opposed to year nine, but it makes me proud. Like the growth that I've seen. If me, as a teacher in year nine, went back to introduce myself to [myself in] year one teaching, I would say, "good job."

Struggles with Implementation

While many of the reflections shared throughout the interview process painted the implementation of PBS and restorative practices in a positive light, experiences were not without frustration. To some degree, the theme of struggles with implementation was present in all 12 of the interviews. These struggles took on a variety of forms but difficulty adjusting to change, a lack of full engagement and investment from staff, the reality that implementation does not solve all problems, and concerns regarding time were the most prevalent subthemes.

Difficulty Adjusting to Change

Educators and even students struggling to adjust to changes in mindset regarding how behavior is addressed under the new system was a common struggled that was mentioned in eight of the interviews. In her interview, Paisley shared her struggles with this change when she said,

> I know sometimes with restorative practices it's more about talking through thing, and sometimes there's no immediate consequences. I'm not saying that there needs to be immediate consequences, but, sometimes, if there's been something physical that's happened, it's more of talking through it and less of there being an immediate consequence. I think that has taken some adjustment to be honest with you. Oftentimes you think, if there's been a major situation, that there should be that instant consequence for that behavior, but with the restorative practices it's more of talking through it. If eventually it lends itself to having a consequence of some sort to make it right, then that does happen, but I think that's been an adjustment piece a little bit from previous school systems I've been with and how that has been managed.

Jason also shared his perspective on how some of his fellow educators struggled to adjust to the new perspectives in practices but also how the shift has led to positive outcomes. He explained,

I'll be honest. I think, at first it was a little difficult for some of the more veteran teachers to kind of fall into this. You know, "I've got to take time out of my class to talk to a kid" or, you know, "They should just do this because I told him to do this." I feel that over time it has allowed teachers [the opportunity] to really understand the trauma that these kids have and that they aren't necessarily just acting out because they don't want to do something. They're acting out because of the morning or afternoon that they had at the house, so I think it's given teachers an opportunity to know their students better. It's not just a seat in a desk. It's actually a student in the classroom who has a story and is more than just a score or something like that. I've even seen a student leave a teacher's class, and the following year that teacher is the check-in/checkout person checking in with that student. They are making sure that "we finished good last year in third grade. Even though I'm still teaching third grade, while you're fourth grader, you can still come in and check with me. I'm here if you need me." It makes it a closer culture, and I feel like there's a lot of teamwork going on.

Lexi also recognized the challenges that can be faced by teachers who have spent the majority of their careers or training working with a more traditional approach to discipline. She shared,

I would say it's a challenging process, especially for teachers that have been teaching for a long time because you have to have a whole new mindset of how you think about things. It's not they [the students] do something wrong, and they are punished for it. It's

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changing that mindset of a student to think about "how can I prevent this from happening

again?" That's not an easy process, and it's not a short process. It takes time and

willingness to change your mind.

Lack of Full Engagement of and Investment in the Process

Another implementation struggle that was mentioned in eight of the interviews was

difficulty in getting all educators to fully engage in the change process and implementation of

new practices. It was often suggested that much of this reluctance stemmed from the

implementation process not spending enough time focusing on "the why" behind the process and

teachers and counselors feeling that, under those conditions, the process was just "one more

thing" they had to try to fit into their day. Aubrey addressed this issue from her perspective as an

administrator when she explained,

> We knew there would be some pushback from staff members that didn't necessarily have
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> the same mindset and didn't understand that mindset that's been big this year. The Help
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> for Billy study, going through the trauma-informed building strong brains practices, and
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> making adults in the building aware of the why has helped bring more awareness and
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> understanding for why kids are doing these things. That it's not a personal attack against
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> you [the teacher]. We're just not sometimes providing the right support that that child
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> needs at the time. Being willing to make that adjustment and to do things differently than
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> what you've done for the last 20 years. I would say buy-in has been challenging from
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> some, not the majority, but from some.

Trisha suggested that the process can seem a bit overwhelming for teachers, but that

training can help ease some of these concerns. She shared,

You need to have all the training, but then you also need to have buy-in. You know I think that that's what's hugely important. Sometimes staffs feel like that it is just one more thing to do. I kind of think maybe we were a little bit that way in the very front end, but I feel like it has shown its worth.

Grace added that, ultimately, it is the job of school leadership to ensure appropriate implementation of PBS and restorative practices. She advised,

At some point, the principal has to say this is what we're doing. The principal has to say that this is a non-negotiable, so we're all moving in the same direction. You shouldn't say that until we're confident about what the direction is or at least be honest enough to know it's going to be fluid. The principal cannot give that moral authority away. They're going to have to have the courage to say, if we want things to change, we have to do things in a different way.

An Imperfect Solution

Another struggle mentioned in six of the interviews was the idea that implementation of PBS and restorative practices is not going to solve all problems and will certainly not solve the majority of problems immediately. Educators suggest that, while the practices and supports can create an environment that may significantly reduce behavior concerns, problems and behavioral issues will still exist and some educators will need to respond to these issues using whatever supports best meet the needs of the students involved. Many of the issues related to this struggle have been addressed in previous themes, but Marie provided important perspective on the process when she shared,

The other thing that I would say is that people need to understand that it's not a magic pill. It's not a golden ticket. It's not like you can take it and suddenly everything is going to be fabulous. It's not. We still have days that are not great. We do. We've had circles that don't go the way we want them to go because either children aren't ready, or we didn't prep efficiently. Those are few and far between, but we've had them. I think [it's important to] know that you get out what you put in. You keep putting in and keep working hard to create an environment that's restorative, that builds community, that is focused on repairing relationships and making sure that all children have a voice and feel trusted and heard, and where the adults have a voice and feel trusted and heard. When you do those things over time, your environment will completely change. It will be totally different, but it will take a minute. It's not going to be instantaneous. It's like losing weight or gaining weight. You didn't gain 75 pounds in a weekend because you went out with your buddies, right? You're not going to lose it that fast either. You didn't get into a spot where your [school's] climate and culture are really toxic overnight. It gradually became that, and to turn it around, you do need to put the work in. It will gradually go back to where you want or get to where you want it to be. For us, it took us a couple months, but by the end of that school year, it was noticeably different.

Andrea's experience was that there were some students that needed a different level of support. She suggested, "My suggestion would be just to not think that it's a cure-all or a fix-all. It works for some students, but there's some that it just doesn't work for them." Additionally, Anna's experience supported the idea that the process can take time to produce results, particularly with certain students. She said,

I think you need to give it time. The first year I think people were like "It's not going to work." It takes time, and you have to stick with it. It's not for everybody. There are definitely a handful of kids that are not to that point. I've seen it work with kindergarteners. I have seen it not work with fifth graders because we are an elementary school. For the kids it has not worked with, we just have to find some other things. I think for the kids that it has not worked with we've had to go back and punt and work on emotions, like empathy, and listening skills, but it's a small handful that it hasn't worked with. It may not have worked the first time we've circled with kids or the second time, but the third time it's clicked. It's not a quick fix. It takes time. You have to do it consistently, but I can tell you the difference has clicked the second and third year. Stick with it.

Time Concerns

The final common struggled expressed in interviews were concerns about time and how the practices will fit into the already busy workday. This struggle was addressed in seven of the interviews and appeared to be a concern that was more prevalent in the early days of implementation than in later years. As shared earlier, Jason mentioned that one of the bigger concerns for teachers who struggled to fully invest in the implementation process was having to take time out of the normal class period to support students using the practices. With this in mind, educators suggested that schools be intentional about addressing issues of time early in the implementation process if PBS and restorative practices are going to be treated as a priority. An example of this struggle was shared by Pam. She reflected on the early days of implementation in her school and shared her concerns regarding the use of time when she said,

One of the things when restorative circles were introduced, I was kind of, "When in the world am I going to have time to do that?" I know that all teachers struggle with time management and just fitting everything in.

To respond to these concerns, Grace shared her plan to address time constraints as part of a larger consideration of how the program would be implemented. She explained,

We trained in the summer, trained in preplanning, provided lesson plans to teachers, built time in the schedule so the first 15 minutes was dedicated to circle time, and we also designed processes to use restorative questions in the reset room and to track behavior.

Scheduling time during the school day for circles was the administrative team's responsibility and essential to the success.

Aubrey also displayed understanding the important of addressing issues with time as she shared,

An issue is time and staffing. Figuring out when you're going to do all of these things and not having enough hands for the number of needs that we have in the building has been challenging. We've just had to get creative with scheduling and different things to try to make it work.

Suggestions for Implementation

The final major theme addressed in the interviews was a group of suggestions for implementation. This was a theme that emerged in all 12 of the interviews. The suggestions common among multiple interviews were intentionality in program development, developing a shared belief in the value of "the why," ensuring that training is authentic, and making time to celebrate all students in the school.

Intentionality in Program Development

The first suggestion, which was addressed in nine of the interviews, was ensuring intentionality in program development. This suggestion refers to the idea that schools who seek to implement this practices and support must do so with consideration for the struggles of implementation addressed earlier. Educators suggested that, by taking the steps to address issues of time, staffing, budget, and training, as well as pairing the behavioral program with a strong model for discipline, schools may avoid many of the issues that early implementers encountered.

One common suggestion was that positive behavior supports and restorative practices need not exist in a vacuum nor be considered as an either/or position with elements of more traditional discipline models. In fact, Grace shared that one of the first components of her school's implementation process revolved heavily on tightening up their discipline policy. She explained, "In year one, we looked deeply at Tier 1 and made decisions on the Discipline Matrix and what behaviors should become Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) and what were classroom-handled situations." Marie advanced this line of thinking by suggesting that restorative practices are a powerful tool made even more powerful when they are used to support students who are also being served through the traditional discipline program. She declared,

> I wish more people would do it. I wish. I wish more people would take this approach and understand that, with the amount of trauma that our children have had and the amount of trauma our parents have had, which then trickles down to our kids. The whole "I'll beat it out of you" or "You'll be in your room isolated for every weekend for the next five months" or whatever thing they come up with. You can't suspend or paddle or punish your way out of whatever we've gotten ourselves into. The way to bring things together and repair what has been done is through creating strong relationships and avenues in

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which to repair them. I wish that other schools would really take a hard look at the kids that they're suspending. [Look at] The frequency of their suspensions and do longitudinal studies on what has happened to that kid as they go on because the kids that are being told "Go! You have to go home for two days. You have to do this." Obviously, there are non-negotiables and that does happen. It happens in my school. There are kids that I suspend for safety reasons, but then we have a re-entry circle when they come back and repair that relationship to bring them back into the fold. You let them know that you love them and that you believe in them.

Classroom teachers also supported the idea of creating a spectrum of supports for students who need it, and this spectrum includes elements of traditional discipline, particularly if these elements support restoration. Paisley provided her perspective on the issue when she stated,

Personally, just my personal belief as an educator, I feel like there does need to be that balance. I mean restorative practices have been a huge help in getting kids to talk and understand each other's emotions and feelings, and for that I think it's wonderful. I do feel that, depending on what the situation is, that there does need to be that balance with traditional discipline procedures. I'm not saying you have to be negative. Just having some sort of plan to make the situation right. You know, if there was an issue of a food fight in the cafeteria and making a mess, it's Ok to have students take some time to go back in there and clean that up after talking through it. We have to go make that right.

Another aspect of intentionality mentioned in the interviews was to start small and to consider feedback throughout the process. This approach allows the process to be designed specifically for the needs of the school. As Kelly suggested,

I think my only suggestion would be just to start small and make it something that works for your environment. Also make it very structured and clear that it's a school-wide expectation. You can adjust as you need to you know and as you see fit. Not every little detail that works at one school will work for another school necessarily, but if you have the outline in place and implement it with fidelity, you're going to see what you need to tweak and change depending on your school.

From the administrator perspective, Grace provided some insight into the process of implementing the practices and supports over the course of 5 years with restorative practices entering into programming in the second year. Even at this pace, the school started small. Grace shared, "in year 2, we conducted a pilot and invited a small group of teachers to do restorative practices, including circle time in the morning to start the day with a focus on building a relationship." Throughout the process, feedback from educators and students led to adjustments in a number of areas. When discussing budgetary decisions, she offered,

It also forced me to have a budget conversation. Are we using our money in the right way? The answer to that was initially, no, we were not. Did we have the resources we needed? Again, the answer was no, we did not.

She also added that this revelation helped her to understand the importance of grounding the process in the work of the leadership team to make sure that she was considering teacher voice throughout the process. She explained,

It all helped me to ensure that, as a principal, I never made any of those decisions in isolation. The leadership team was around me and framed my thinking. When we looked at data, we looked at it to inform our thinking and to work on taking blame out of the

conversation to finding a solution using a systems approach. We wanted to build a place where we were respectful to teachers in the same way that we wanted children to be respectful to each other. I would say it changed me dramatically, and it also educated me as a learner to sit at the table with my teachers so that we can approach things in a way, as a norm, from the position of a learner. That was powerful.

What I always try to capture now is that we have to always listen and respect teacher voice. As leaders and principals, if we are not mindful to be respectful to teacher voice, we may miss the real story. Negative is not necessarily bad. It is important to suspend judgment and listen deeply as a leader. That's a decision and not a feeling. To let them [the teachers] be angry at you as a leader is a decision, not a feeling, so I learned that if I wanted to get to the root of it, as a leader, I better be willing to listen to all of the complaints. That was a big change.

The final suggestion for developing programming in an intentional way was to use the schedule to support the goals of the program. Pam shared her experience with time being built into the schedule specifically for daily circles at her school. She suggested that this intentional action made it easier for her to provide support to her students in a way that didn't feel like she was sacrificing instructional time, which was a noted concern in interviews. She shared,

> For me, not focusing on, "Oh, I've got to have it." Having a schedule set aside [for circles] and, if you miss it, it's not a big deal. Trying to schedule time [is important] so that the kids have that sort of routine, and they know what to do. I think it's helpful for them. I think it's helpful for the teachers. To me it just seemed to make everything work a little bit more smoothly.

Develop a Shared Belief in the Value of "The Why"

The second suggestion made by the educators was for schools to make sure that they adequately explained why they were implementing positive behavior supports and restorative practices. This suggestion returned to the importance of the issue of "the why," and seven educators specifically addressed the need to make certain that educators throughout the school understood why considering all factors that motivate student behavior was important for the growth of both students and staff. Grace shared that as she began her journey into the implementation of positive behavior supports and restorative practices, she needed to learn more about the motivations behind behavior herself, and once she did, it changed her perspective on both supporting students and supporting educators. She explained,

> I spent the weekends in the first year of the principalship researching myself and established a partnership with a university around the work of school culture and PBIS, but they were pieces and not the whole. When you ask me how it changed me, it forced me as a school leader to apply research through a different lens. It reminded me of what I had learned through my graduate work. It also spotlighted to me the absence of research in this conversation. The only research I found at that point during those years that was specific to trauma-informed and large office discipline referrals was out of Canada. In year 2, that conversation started to evolve in the local area due to a really innovative person in education herself, and we had access to that. I knew that was a missing piece because it was the neuroscience piece.

> At that point, we had to understand that we were angry. We (the adults in the building) were angry at children when children were angry at themselves because of what they were experiencing at home. I grew a lot in recognizing that there were systems that

had not been created yet, so that changed my practice. I also recognize that, if we want to get to the heart of students, we need to be better with adults. We work in a business of people and in a business of hearts, so as a leader, it invited me to think about things through a very different lens. [I needed to consider] what systems were in place to support our children who are experiencing trauma and what systems were in place to support my adults who are also experiencing trauma.

Another administrator, Marie, explained why taking the time to develop an understanding of "the why" is so important to the entire process of implementation.

Before you start, you need to do a lot of work to help people understand "the why" behind the process. I think taking time to do very intentional training and understanding. With the International Institute of Restorative Practice, through which I'm certified, the first day of training of those two days really talks about the why, talks about Braithwaite, talks about separating the deed from the doer, and talks about the misconceptions that people have that. They [those unfamiliar with the process] think that, if you meet in a circle, everyone hugs a tree and then nobody's held accountable for anything. Help staff and adults who don't understand this practice fully and think it's just some kind of way to not hold kids accountable. Get them to understand the deeper meaning of it because, without buy-in and understanding, you will only have individuals who are checking a box and that will get you nowhere. You've got to understand "the why" of what you do because that will inform your practice and deepen your practice of this approach so that children and adults and everyone in the building has the same experience, and you get the outcome that you want.

Jason shared his belief that educators must understand why students act the way that they do in order to depersonalize the students' actions and move forward to support them. He disclosed,

> I think you have to have buy-in. Teachers are great, don't get me wrong, but [the process] is a culture change. It's realizing that, for these students, you have to understand who they are and why they act and do the things that they do. You have to understand the trauma and what their life looks like on a daily basis. They come to school because it's their safe place, and we all act out in our safe place sometimes because it's our safe place.

Provide Authentic Training

The next suggestion was closely related to the previous one, and this suggestion was that schools try to ensure that trainings are authentic and provided by those who have experienced the process firsthand. This suggestion appeared in six of the interviews. Jason provided one of the more compelling arguments for authentic training when he said,

> I think [it is important to] just have buy-in from teachers and have trainings that are real world by people who have been in the trenches of a teacher and not someone who is not from the field of education. There's nothing wrong with psychologists or professional counselors, but if they're not in the educational field, educators won't take them seriously. I think it's got to come from people who are behavior interventionists in an academic setting day-in and day-out and who have seen it work. If the program needs to be implemented at the elementary level, the trainer needs to be someone who's done it at the elementary level because it's different in elementary, middle school, and high school.

Grace suggested that, after implementing a positive behavior support program for a year in her school, she began considering additional trainings beyond the specific practices used at the school that also supported the goals of addressing student behavior, including trauma-informed training. She shared, "We begin to research additional supports for the school, attended a trauma-informed training, engaged in restorative practices training through the state of Tennessee, and started to weave and connect that to our PBS program."

Sarah addressed the value of also looking beyond traditional trainings and visiting schools that already implement the practices and supports with fidelity. She advised,

> I think really just hearing from other schools that are in districts that are using it. Just being able to go in and see it for yourself and kind of get a feeling. Sometimes, when you walk into a school, you can feel the atmosphere and how it is, so I think just kind of seeing it from the outside [is important].

Make Time to Celebrate all Students

The final suggestion that emerged from interviews, which was mentioned by six educators, was the importance of creating programs that celebrate all students. Andrea shared two programs in her school that were developed by the school's counselor.

> One is the [school name] Shout Out. This award could be for anything, literally anything that we were happy about or proud of. We just turn it into the office, and they do an announcement at the end of the day. He also implemented something called the [School Mascot] Motivator. At the end of each week, we nominate someone, and they only pick one from the whole school. That student gets a special prize, and they're recognized in front of the whole school.

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A similar program that celebrates students on a monthly basis was described by Paisley when she shared,

> We do a student of the month celebration each month where we are recognizing two individuals from each class within the school. That is really not based on who has the highest academics. It's really on who has made the most growth, so everybody has a chance to meet that goal and be able to be a student of the month.

Another type of schoolwide reward program mentioned was rewarding students Kelly identified a schoolwide positive behavior support reward at her school when she disclosed, "We have a schoolwide ticket system where students who are exhibiting positive behavior can earn tickets that they take to the office for a reward drawing at the end of the week." Marie also mentioned a point-of-contact reward program as her school when she described, "We do Opossum stickers to celebrate when we see something on the spot, and they do a good job. They're Opossum!"

Andrea implemented a point-of-contact reward system in her classroom so that all students can be reward for good behavior. She explained,

> Any time a student is doing a great job or just anything that's positive that I kind of want to brag on them about, I'll give them a penny, and at the end of the week, they get to count their pennies and I have a [reward] menu that they can choose from based on the number of pennies they have. The kids really like the penny system. Some of the things on the menu of course are more popular than others, but some of the most popular are positive visits with the administrators, counselors, and the interventionist. They just love

that positive time with them. That's probably our most popular reward. It's even more popular than the treasure box, and my treasure box is full of cool stuff.

In her interview, Anna intentionally established the importance of creating systems that celebrate all students by highlighting the importance of making sure that students who almost always exhibit good behavior do not feel that they are missing out. She shared,

We have to make sure we're celebrating the kids that do the right thing all the time. The kids who are struggling get pulled out and get extra attention, so we have to make sure to celebrate everybody in some way. That's not to say that kids who need the extra support don't get it. Fair is not equal, and our kids have to really understand that, but we need to really celebrate the ones who are doing the right thing as well. We need to have these extra celebrations for them as well.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

The release of the Safe Schools Report by the Tennessee Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (2018) signified a shift in how schools were asked to address student behavior across the state. No longer were behavioral programs focusing exclusively on the punishment of behavior viewed as acceptable. Instead, schools were asked to develop programs that were more proactive and less reactive in their response to student behavioral issues. To achieve this outcome, the report suggested that schools adopt programs that include the use of positive behavior supports and restorative practices.

This suggestion was supported by research. For instance, support for restorative practices was provided by the work of Cameron and Thorsborne (2001), Morrison (2005), Ritchie and O'Connell (2001), and Tinker (2002), Lyubansky et al. (2016), Augustine et al. (2018), which suggested that these practices can lead to positive outcomes for both dispute resolution, school climate, and school attendance. Research also supported the use of schoolwide positive behavior supports. Research on PBS identified positive outcomes related to a reduction in suspensions (Gage et al., 2019), improvements in overall organizational health in schools (Bradshaw et al., 2008), lower levels of burnout and increased levels of efficacy (Ross et al., 2011), reductions in teacher-reported incidents of bullying and peer rejection (Wasdorp, 2012), and even improved academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

The problem that this study was designed to address was one of representation and lack of educator voice in the literature. The majority of previous research focused primarily on student outcomes. Even when educator voices were considered, responses were often captured in the form of surveys with little detail available. This qualitative study was designed specifically to

capture educator perceptions of the influence of programs focusing on positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture, educator efficacy, and job satisfaction. This problem was addressed through the use of a series of interviews with 12 educators ranging from classroom teachers to counselors to administrators.

The central research question in this study is "What are educator perceptions of the influence of programs focusing on positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture, educator efficacy, and job satisfaction?" In order to target specific elements of the research, four sub-questions were explored:

Sub-question 1: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on school culture?

Sub-question 2: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on their level of professional efficacy?

Sub-question 3: What are educator perceptions of the influence of positive behavior supports and restorative practices on job satisfaction?

Sub-question 4: What elements of positive behavior supports and restorative practices are employed in the educators' schools?

Throughout the process, seven major themes emerged. These themes of understanding the underlying causes for student behavior, change, common practices of positive behavior supports and restorative practices, benefits for students, benefits for educators, struggles with implementation, and suggestions for implementation represent the lived experience of educators who actively implemented positive behavior supports and restorative practices with fidelity. These insights can provide a unique opportunity for educators in other schools and environments

to understand what considerations are needed if they hope to implement similar programs in their schools.

Discussion

The primary result of this study was the emergence of seven major themes and a number of subthemes. These themes represent the common experience of the educators interviewed, which suggests that they represent common issues that occur throughout the implementation process of positive behavior supports and restorative practices in schools.

Understanding the Underlying Causes of Student Behavior

Understanding the underlying causes of student behavior, which was often referred to as "the why" by participants, was a major theme that emerged from their interviews. In the literature, the idea of evaluating behavior through a deeper understanding of a student's life experience was supported by the work of both Zehr (1990) and Braithwaite (1989), and the suggestion that schools may become overly focused on academics and need to refocus some energy of the social and emotional development of students was suggested in the work of Goleman (1998). Participants in this study shared that significant changes occurred in their schools only after educators became intentionally proactive in understanding why students made the decisions that they made instead of simply reacting to individual behaviors. This process led to deeper relationships with students and a sense of personal accomplishment as educators felt that they were better serving their students. They also reported that training their students the process of understanding the origins of behavior helped them achieve stronger bonds with peers and a supported the development of empathy.

The way in which many of the participants shared their experiences with this process suggested that this process was both emotional and fulfilling. In field notes taken during the

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interviews, participants were observed slowing down their speech and even looking off into the distance while discussing the influence that understanding and focusing on "the why" has had on their school experience. In some cases, educators even suggested that they felt some shame in how they responded to student behavior before learning more about positive behavior supports and restorative practices. These reactions, along with suggestions from participants that schools looking to implement these practices and supports in their schools prioritize training in "the why," suggest that this concept is the emotional core of the work. Moreover, the benefits that can be gained from implementation of practices associated with positive behavior supports and restorative practices will always be limited without a deep, honest, and sustained focus on both the numerous factors in a child's life that influence their behavior and the ways in which educators can address how children cope with these influences. Based on the information shared in interviews, it is fair to say that taking the time to understand why students and even educators respond to events in the way in which they do is never time wasted and may determine the overall success of shifting a school's response to student behavior. It is also a key factor in making sure that the shift is not just "one more thing" for educators to have to do.

Change

The importance of change in both mindset and practice was another major theme that materialized through analysis of participant responses. While the issue of a change in mindset was previously addressed in the discussion involving "the why," the need to adapt practices for responding to students' behavior was another important subtheme. The idea that educators and schools would need to reevaluate both how and why they respond to student behavior was reflected in the work of both Goleman (1998) and Zehr (2016). This concept was also suggested in the final report released by the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task

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Force (2008). The literature suggested that schools need to their change offerings and practices to provide a spectrum of services to students that address their behavioral needs and to help avoid issues of alienation from the school community that Catalano et al. (2004) and Vossekuil et al. (2002) correlated to juvenile delinquency and school violence respectively. Positive behavior supports and restorative practices both provide appropriate responses to these suggestions. Positive behavior support programs, as described in the works of Sailor et al. (2011), Lewis and Sugai (2017), Sugai et al. (2000), Walker (1996), and Weisz et al. (2005), charge schools with the expectation that they engage in detailed considerations regarding how they respond to issues of student discipline. This allows educators an opportunity to reflect on the frequency in which punitive responses are assigned to students, the likelihood that a student will receive a punitive versus a restorative response to their actions, and the concentration of these practices among groups of students. This change in organizational practice can led to changes in discipline practice and a shift from behavior responses that are primarily reactive to practice steeped in proactive considerations. On the other hand, restorative practices (Zehr, 1990) are designed to provide opportunities for offenders and those they have harmed to rebuild relationships, and this process allows offenders to avoid becoming alienated from the larger school community. Implementation of these practices represents a considerable change in practice for schools that primarily focus on a traditional discipline model.

Participants identified change in both mindset and practices as a source of both frustration and revelation. On one hand, results from multiple interviews suggested that the difficulty that comes from any change, particularly change so fundamental as is required by PBS and restorative practices, can led to animosity at the staff level, so some pushback should be expected. On the other hand, educators who successful made it through this change in mindset

and practice, which not all educators interviewed had, often remarked that they could not imagine going back to their old practices and mindset. Instead, they had embraced the new position in which they found themselves and hoped others would engage in the process and realize similar benefits.

Participants suggested that leadership teams who wish to implement PBS and restorative practice in their schools should understand that the process will be complex because it will ask educators to make changes on a fundamental level, but they also suggested that the stress inherent to the process will be worth it once benefits from implementation are realized. With this in mind, the process will require more than simple changes to the discipline code. Instead, it will require a significant shift in how responses to behavior look and how they feel. While changes in practice are a normal part of an educator's career, transformations in how major elements of the school experience are perceived occur less often and can lead to both anxiety and fear. Educational leaders must be considerate of these emotions and be proactive in their approach to addressing them. Taking steps, such as providing appropriate training, to address emotional concerns of staff must be addressed in implementation plan. Furthermore, leaders may also consider planning an implementation process designed to more deliberately change elements of practice over the course of multiple years so that implementation can be responsive to the needs of the organization. In short, the implementation of PBS and restorative practices in schools will require major changes, but as educational leaders ask their staff to provide support to students that is "firm but fair," they must also apply this "firm but fair" mentality to their approach to schoolwide implementation.

Common Practices of Positive Behavior Supports and Restorative Practices

The next major theme to emerge from the interviews was an analysis of the practices most used in schools implementing positive behavior supports and restorative practices. The primary practices identified were the use of circles, direct instruction of behavior, the use of restorative questions, and the use of either behavior contracts or a check-in/check-out system for students with more prominent behavior issues.

Circles. Results of the educator interviews suggested that participants were using circles for a variety of reasons, which was supported in the literature in the work of both Zehr (2016) and Pranis (2014). The most common way in which participants used circles was as daily meetings that provided an opportunity for students to share their opinions and feelings with the larger group, but more focused circles that brought together an offender and those who were hurt by the offender were also in practice. Field notes from the interview identified a number of incidents where participants smiled at a memory of experience they had during daily circle and time, and this suggests that the practice has real value for educators and students. Additionally, participants who had facilitated more structured and intense restorative circles spoke to the transformative nature of the process and how it shaped relationships between peers moving forward. These outcomes suggest that circles can be a powerful tool if used with fidelity and that looking for authentic training in the practice of using circles would be a good step for educational leaders who wish to introduce restorative practice in their schools.

Direct Instruction of Behavior. The direct and intentional teaching of behavioral expectations was another common practice that emerged from the interviews. The direct teaching of behavioral expectations was supported by Sugai and Horner (2011), as well as the work of Gage et al. (2020). The value of direct instruction in behavioral expectations seems to lie in the

fact that it standardizes the expectation that schools are places of learning. When behavioral expectations are not explicitly modeled and reinforced, a dichotomy is created that separates expectations for the development of content knowledge and the development of social acumen. Participants often identified the direct instruction of behavior as a seemingly natural extension of a school experience that responds to skill deficits with focused training. Under traditional models of discipline, students are expected to develop compliance and understanding of behavioral expectations either before they arrive at school or solely in response to punitive measures. Through positive behavior supports and restorative practices, behavioral expectations and norms are taught explicitly, and students are not expected to either already have all of the answers or to figure them out on their own in response to punishment.

Restorative Questions. The use of restorative questions as standardized by the work of Zehr (2016) was another practice commonly addressed in interviews. Educators identified the restorative questions as an important tool in standardizing social expectation of conversations that can often be emotional and stressful. The use of these questions was often identified as one of the most important tools that educators gained through the implementation of restorative practices. It was also suggested that the consistent use of these questions to address behavior had a calming effect on students because they knew what to expect when a teacher needed to address behavioral incidents with them and that they would have an opportunity to share their side of the issue. This was a significant shift in practice from more traditional models of discipline where educators often respond to behavioral incidents by reprimanding students in response to their actions and without soliciting any of the student's perspective before doing so.

It was offered that, in many schools, the use of the restorative questions had become such a central element of daily practice that all educators were equipped with a card that listed the

restorative questions. One side of the card lists questions for students who were engaging in challenging behavior, and the other lists questions to support those who were affected by this behavior. These cards were obtained through the International Institute of Restorative Practices (https://store.iirp.edu/restorative-questions-cards-pack-of-100-english-or-spanish/) and are available in both English and Spanish.

   Check-In/Check-Out. The final major practice identified in the interviews, which was used primarily with students identified as needed more behavioral support that the average student, was the use of either check-in/check-out (CICO) systems or behavior contracts that required regular consultation with educators regarding behavior. In the literature, the use of CICO systems was supported by the work of Fairbanks et al., (2007), Sugai and Horner (2011), Newcomer et al. (2013), Conley et al. (2018), and Gage et al. (2020). The primary function of CICO is that students meet either daily or multiple times throughout the day with at trusted adult to review targeted behavior expectations and progress toward behavioral goals, which was often tied to rewards. Participants identified the relationship built between student and CICO contact as the primary benefit of the practice, but the opportunity to help students focus on a small number of specifically targeted behaviors to address was also identified as important. Interestingly, some participants suggested that, as students became more comfortable with the process, they would begin to reflect on their actions and challenge themselves to see if they could improve to levels beyond the expectations as originally designed. While participants reported mixed results when using CICO with some students, the opportunity for a struggling student to build a deeper relationship with a supportive adult and to address issues specifically influencing their school experience makes the use of CICO as worthwhile consideration.

Benefits for Students

The benefits that students realize from implementation of PBS and restorative practices was another major theme that developed in interviews. Social growth, consistency, and deeper relationships with both peers and educators were identified as benefits for students in schools that use positive behavior supports and restorative practices. These results are reflected in the work of Braithwaite (1989), Tinker (2002), Harrison (2007), Gillison et al. (2010), Van Ness and Strong (2015), and Lyubansky et al. (2016). One of the more compelling outcomes shared was the growth of students in the area of leadership. Participants identified several incidents where students began taking ownership over the process of social development, including incidents where they became confident enough to respond the inappropriate behavior of their peers with support and a reminder that "we don't do that here." The supportive nature of these interactions, as opposed to interactions in which a student's primary response to the inappropriate behavior of a peer is to either tell the teacher or harshly reprimand them, indicated a significant shift in the social dynamic. In this new reality, ownership over the social process was available to all, and everyone understood that they played a part in the social structure of the classroom and school. Furthermore, this shared ownership allowed for deeper relationships among peers and educators.

Participants also reported that the consistency inherent to positive behavior supports and restorative practices had a calming effect on the environment. Students knew what to expect when behavioral incidents occurred. Educators reported reduced anxiety over how to handle the types of situations that can escalate quickly if not addressed in an appropriate manner. In short, the consistency of the practices created a more supportive and desirable environment for all.

Benefits for Educators

Participant responses indicated that the benefits obtained from PBS and restorative practices were not limited to students, as educators also realized significant perks. These benefits included having more tools to support students, better relationships with students, improved job satisfaction supported by a more positive work environment, and increased confidence. These outcomes are supported by the work of Bradshaw et al. (2008) and Ross et al. (2011). Having more tools to help support students was the most often mentioned educator benefit in interviews, and it was heavily tied to an increase in educator confidence. Furthermore, it was suggested that these practices and supports gave teachers the means to address situations for which, before implementation, they had no particular responses at all. This created a situation where they were no longer afraid to respond to student need because they were prepared to handle the issue. This lack of ambiguity bolstered educator confidence in their ability to support their students and created a more positive environment in the classroom.

As teachers became more comfortable with the supports and practices in their classroom, they reported an increase in job satisfaction outside the classroom as well. Participants suggested that, as their stress over not knowing how to support students decreased, the overall environment of the school improved. As relationships with students in the classroom improved, trust was formed and ownership over the process was shared. At this point, educators reported that this shared ownership moved beyond the walls of the classroom. Participants shared that some of the older students began taking on leadership roles and supporting younger students, and many students began to feel like part of a larger family. It is in this environment where job satisfaction increased. Educators suggested that, as they became part of this family environment, they began to enjoy coming to work more and more.

Struggles with Implementation

      While the participants shared many experiences that were positive, they also identified

some struggles they had with the implementation process. The primary struggles mentioned by

participants were difficulty dealing with change, a lack of full commitment to the process from

some of their coworkers, the reality that implementing the supports and practices on their own

are not going to solve every problem, and concerns with time. On the issue of change, the work

of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested that people struggle most heavily with change when

their fundamental beliefs about how something important to them works are challenged. For

educators implementing PBS and restorative practices, the change in mindset required by the

transition from the more reactive nature of traditional models of discipline to a more proactive

approach certainly constitutes a significant change in perception. Additionally, Fugate et al.

(2012) found that change can be even more difficult in organizations where previous changes

have not been successful. The pace of change in the world education over the last two decades,

as well as its uneven success rate, has created an environment where educator reluctance to

changes should be expected. On the issue of stress being caused by a lack of full commitment to

the process by staff, we may look to work of Fullan (2011) who suggested the success of a

program is heavily dependent on all members of the community working on a common purpose.

We may also find support in the work of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) who explored the

importance of value consonance, which is to say that, if implementers of change are to be fully

invested in it, they should feel that the values at the center of the change align with their values.

Unfortunately, when educators are already experiencing anxiety over the idea of change in

general, it seems likely that at least some members of a school community will be reluctant to

engage in a significant change in such a core element of the school experience as addressing student behavior.

Educator concerns regarding the inability of positive behavior supports and restorative practices to meet all needs of all students reflects the findings of researcher who focus on positive behavior supports. As described by Gage et al. (2020), positive behavior support advocates acknowledge the need for a spectrum of services. To facilitate this, fully developed PBS programs are organized into a tiered system with students who exhibit the highest need served in Tier 3. Participants concerns regarding this issue seems to either reflect their affirmation of the need for a tiered program or their belief that procedures to move students from one tier to another in their school were not optimally responsive.

The final area of struggle, which were concerns related to time was an idea reflected in the work of Klassen and Chiu (2010). Participants suggested that, with all of the academic, vocational, and social programs running in a school at any one time, it was easy for the work of PBS and restorative practices to be relegated to "just one more thing" status and not given the focus that it requires. None of the educators who discussed this issue suggested that the work required to appropriately implement PBS and restorative practices should be given less time. Instead, they suggested that school leaders needed to intentionally include time in the schedule in order to ensure that the work was seen as a priority.

Implications for these findings suggest that the decision to implement positive behavior supports and restorative practices should lead to considerations of how these identified concerns can be addressed. All organizations have staff members that are more reluctant to change than others, and it may be easy to focus on either the group that readily embraces change and accepts that imperfect nature of any system or the group that struggles to accept change and looks for

reasons to reject it. Educational leaders must address the needs of both groups and those who fall in the middle. While it is exciting to get swept up in the process of implementing change with a group that consists of people who are excited for it, it is important to also develop responses to potential concerns so that all positive momentum gained in the beginning of a process is not dashed by problems that arise soon after.

Suggestions for Implementation

The final major themes to emerge from the interviews were suggestions for implementation. Participants suggested that interested educational leaders be intentional in their development of their programs to address issues of time, budget, training, and educator support. They also suggested that schools created a shared belief in "the why" behind the process, provide authentic training to teachers, and make time to celebrate all students. While the suggestion to develop a shared belief in "the why" has roots in the work of Braithwaite (1989), other suggestions were unique to this study.

In terms of developing programs intentionally, participants suggested that school leaders need to consider the individual needs of their school when planning implementation. This may mean that time is built into the schedule that is specifically allotted to classroom circles. It should also mean that all educators in the school are thoroughly trained on both the myriad motivations behind student behavior and the purpose of the program being implemented in the school. It may also mean that budget conversations need to occur to ensure that appropriate materials and personnel are in place to implement the program. Another element of intentional consideration is to determine how these programs will work in combination with more traditional elements of the discipline program already in place. As stated by participants, restorative practices and positive behavior supports alone will not meet the needs of all students, so a spectrum of services is a

necessity and should be a priority. Finally, all decisions need to be made in concert with educators throughout the school. While participants indicated that it was appropriate to limit the majority of these conversations to the leadership team, they suggested that it was inappropriate for these decisions to be made solely by the school administrator who then sends edicts to the staff.

The need for authentic training was a common suggestion, and most of the participants who suggested it were quick to explain that educators struggle to trust the word of those who do not have experience implementing practices and supports in environments similar to their own. While training from a group like the International Institute of Restorative Practices is appropriate for developing a shared understanding of "the why" because that's the focus of much of their work, responses in interviews suggested that bringing in professors who had never directly implemented the practices in a classroom to discuss program logistics would not be well received. Similarly, educators who implemented the practices and supports at the secondary level may not be as welcome in elementary schools as those who were involved in the implementation of the practices in an elementary setting. The key issue appeared to be the legitimacy of authority in the environment. Educators can quicky identify an imposter, so focus must be kept on authenticity.

The final suggestion, which was making sure that all students are rewarded, was developed around the idea that PBS and restorative practice programs naturally provide additional supports to those who need them. While participants felt that this was certainly an appropriate response, there was concern that students who already behave appropriately in most situations and often act as models for other students could feel left out. In the most extreme circumstances, students who exhibit appropriate behavior regularly may feel justified in

behaving in appropriate so that they can obtain additional attention. The best way to combat this issue, according to the study participants, is to make sure to implement programs that give all students a change to be reward for good behavior. While they did not suggest that all students who exhibit good behavior need to be rewarded at all times, they did identify the importance of implementing at least one schoolwide program that gives students a chance to earn a reward for good behavior on a regular basis.

Implications for Practice

As schools reevaluate their approach to addressing student behavior and seek to include more positive and restorative practices, input from practitioners with experiences implementing these supports and practices can be an important tool in preparation. Based on the insight provided by the educators who participated in this study, seven implications for practice became apparent.

The first implication for practice is that educators who would like to implement Positive Behavior Supports and restorative practices should take the time to train all members of their staff in the origins of and reasons behind the practices. For restorative practices, this specifically addresses the suggestion made by this study's participants to take the time to help staff understand "the why." Understanding why people behave in the way that they do is an idea reflected in the works of Braithwaite (1989), and, according to participant Marie, training provided by the International Institute for Restorative Practices places a heavy emphasize on this area of development. As Fullan (2011) discovered, implementation of changes works best when all staff members are working from a shared understanding of the purpose of the change, and schools that train all staff in the origins of and reasons behind PBS and restorative practices create fertile ground for successful change.

The second consideration for practice, providing authentic training, is tied heavily to the first. As described in the work of Ryan and Deci (2000), self-determination theory defines a need to develop competence as one of the three universal needs that motivates people to act for intrinsic reasons, and training is one way in which educators can move closer to a position of competence. With that being said, the quality of training does affect the ability of trainees to reach a position of competence, and the authenticity of trainers plays a role in the overall quality of the training. Based on the insight provided by study participants, it is important to ensure that trainings are provided by individuals and groups that have successful implemented standards and practices. For conceptual training, groups such as the International Institute for Restorative Practices, seems to provide an appropriate level of authenticity even if the trainers have not actively implemented the practices in schools. For training in actual implementation, trainers should have relevant experience that reflects their ability to implement practices and supports in an environment as close to that of the trainees as possible. For example, if a staff being trained is from an elementary school, it is best to find trainer who has experience implementing programming in an elementary school. While trainers who understand PBS and restorative practices only on a conceptual level can provide some insight, making sure to find trainers with authentic experience is preferred.

The third implication for practice is that school leaders who decide to begin implementing positive behavior supports and restorative practices in their schools should work to integrate these supports and practices with some of the traditional practices of discipline, including the use of a discipline matrix, that are likely already in place. The idea of providing a spectrum of services to support students at various levels of behavioral need is reflected in the work of Gage et al. (2020) and more generally in the tiered systems defined in Positive Behavior

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Supports. While it is an admirable goal to move from a system of punitive responses to behavior to one that is more restorative and positive, study participants warned against completely eliminating traditional elements of discipline, even suggesting that this could be viewed as an elimination of all consequences. Instead, elements of both systems can be integrated to provide the most potent responses to student needs.

The fourth implication for practice is that school leaders must consider adjustments to budget, schedule, and staffing to best support the implementation process. As Deal and Peterson (2016) suggested, school culture is important allows the beliefs, passions, and traditions of an organization to be transferred to the work in a way that is meaningful and passionate, and how a school is managed via the budget, schedule, and staffing is a definitive reflection of priorities. The implementation of positive behavior supports and restorative practices is not something that can be done lightly if implementation levels are going to reach the level of fidelity required to make them work. Instead, school leaders must be intentional in their use of time, budget, and staffing. It is through intentional consideration of time that scheduled blocks of the school day can be allotted to classroom circles. It is through the intentional consideration of budget that visual cues, restorative questions cards, lesson materials, and training can be provided to all staff members. It is through intentional use of personnel that staff can be available to support classrooms when tensions escalate to the point that support is needed. These decisions must be made thoughtfully and in consideration of the larger goals of the school.

The fifth and sixth implications for practice represent intentional consideration of the needs of those implementing the change process. These implications are the need to start small in the implementation process and to make sure that the process is responsive to data and educator input. Again, the work of Ryan and Deci (2000) guides our understanding that individuals are

motivated to pursue goals based on their need to gain competence. Part of this process is the ability of individuals to feel that they have gained competence in one area before moving on to more advanced implementations. Schools wishing to implement restorative practices and positive behavior supports must consider the need for teachers to feel confident in the early stages of the process in order to obtain full commitment from practitioners and the need to make timely adjustments based on measured outcomes and feedback. The need to start small may be reflected in schools beginning the implementation process by piloting elements of the program in a small number of classrooms, or it may mean that school leaders should consider a multi-year approach in which various elements of the programs are added each year. In either scenario, the importance of looking at student data and listening to the feedback from educators in the school is of vital importance. Successful implementation of these supports and practices requires a team of dedicated educators working toward the same outcomes and doing so by being responsive to data and the opinions of those engaged in the work.

The seventh and final implication for practice is that schools must develop strategies for rewarding all students. The work of Gage et al. (2020) suggested the importance of a strong programming that supports the development of students who do not exhibit significant needs for additional support in regard to behavior. These Tier 1 programs provide basic training for all students but must also provide motivation for students to continue to receive positive feedback when they model appropriate behavior. Also, developing student reward programs that celebrate all students ensures that students who are already meeting expectations are not locked out of the additional attention and time required by students who need more support. In short, students in all stages of need should have the opportunity to be rewarded for their good works.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study represented the responses of 12 educators across three elementary schools. With that in mind, it is appropriate to consider the limitations inherent in their responses and how future researchers may provide deeper insight into staff perceptions of the implementation of positive behavior supports and restorative practices. Three of these recommendations are related to changes in the pool of potential participants.

The first recommendation would be to recreate the study with a focus on educators implementing the supports and practices at either the middle or high school level. Experiences in implementation at the secondary level may reflect the experiences of those at the elementary level or may vary widely, and the importance of these programs suggest that studies of these experiences are worth considering.

The second recommendation for future research is to focus on participants who practice outside the East Tennessee Region. All participants in this study worked in Northeast Tennessee, but positive behavior supports and restorative practices are implemented in schools across the world, and the perceptions of educators implementing these practices elsewhere provide important perspective regarding the potential universality of the experience.

The third recommendation for future research is to compare the perceptions of teachers who teach students in the developmental years of the program, which would include teachers of lower elementary grades, with teachers of students in the same environment who have more experience with the supports and practices, which would include teachers of upper elementary grades. Perceptions of educators may differ depending on how comfortable with the process students are and comparing the perspectives of teachers at various point of development may provide unique insight into the process as a whole.

The next recommendation for future research is to expand the study format to a mixed method approach. In this form, qualitative data could still be obtained through the use of interviews, but quantitative data, such as survey results, could help provide a more general overview of staff perceptions related to the PBS and restorative practices. By gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, researchers could explore similarities and differences between the perception of individuals and the perception of the entire staff.

Another recommendation is to provide additional restrictions of the participant pool by assessing implementation fidelity at the classroom level. For this study, justification for assuming implementation fidelity in the classrooms of individual participants was provided by the fact that teachers work in schools that the Tennessee Tiered Supports Center had identified as appropriately implementing practices and supports with fidelity, but these fidelity assurances are assessed at the school level. To capture the experience of the most dedicated implementors, researchers could use an additional method to assure that individual participants were implementing the supports and practices at the classroom level. While this may limit some of the diversity in perceptions found in this study, it would better capture the experiences of practitioners dedicated to the task.

Virtual education provides another possibility for future research. While this study focused on implementing elements of positive behavior supports and restorative practices in traditional settings, the recent increase in educational experiences available exclusively online could provide another opportunity for implementation. Research here could focus on barriers to implementation in a virtual environment, modifications to more traditional programs, or evaluating the potential of specific practices to transition to a virtual environment.

The final recommendation for future research would be to focus on educator perceptions of individual elements of restorative practices and positive behavior supports. For example, research focused specifically on educator perceptions of using daily circles in the classroom could improve depth of knowledge related to this practice. While this study provided a more general view of techniques used for restorative practices and positive behavior supports, targeted research on any of the common practices identified by participants in this study could provide unique insight that particular technique.

Chapter Summary

This phenomenological study was designed to capture the experiences of 12 elementary educators with the purpose of gathering their perceptions of the use of restorative practices and positive behavior supports in their schools with a particular focus on how these programs influenced school climate, their professional efficacy, and their job satisfaction. From these interviews, seven major themes emerged, which were the importance of understanding the underlying causes of student behavior, change, common practices of positive behavior supports and restorative practices, benefits for students, benefits for educators, struggles with implementation, and suggestions for implementation. These findings led to the identification of seven implications for practice:

- The need to train all staff member in the origins of and reasons behind positive behavior supports and restorative practices
- The need for training to be authentic
- The importance of appropriately integrating traditional elements of discipline into behavior programs that focus primarily on positive behavior supports and restorative practices

- Consideration of the role that budget, schedule, and staffing play in the implementation process

- The suggestion to start small when beginning the implementation process.

- The importance of being responsive to both data and educator feedback

- Prioritizing systems that reward appropriate behavior of all students.

Finally, in response to limitations of the study's design, six recommendations for future research were made:

- Recreate the study with a participant pool of educators who implement the supports and practices exclusively at either the middle school or high school level

- Recreate the study with participants who practice outside of East Tennessee.

- Capture and compare perceptions of educators who work primarily with students who are in the earlier stage of their behavior development with those whose students are further along in the developmental process.

- Change the study to allow for a mixed methods approach.

- Restrict the participant pool by considering measures of implementation fidelity at the individual classroom level.

- Evaluate attempts to implement positive behavior supports and restorative practices in virtual environments.

- Capture educator perceptions of individual elements of positive behavior supports and restorative practices.

In closing, the findings of this study represent more than points of data to be organized and analyzed. Instead, they represent the experiences of men and women who have lived through the changes, struggles, and successes that come with the implementation of positive behavior

supports and restorative practices in their schools. Through their interviews, participants have shared a number of common experiences, as well as some experiences unique to their own personal journeys. They have shared benefits enjoyed by both staff and students because of their decision to change the way in which they approach issues of student behavior, but they have also identified areas of struggle. They have shared their perspective on how the implementation of these supports and practices have changed their schools' cultures, their professional efficacy, and their job satisfaction. Finally, they have shared their suggestions to educators from other schools who may wish to implement these practices and, by doing so, have provided an authentic and insightful roadmap to the process.

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APPENDIX

Participant Interview Questions

Participant interviews were conducted using the following questions:

1. How long have you been working in education?

2. How long have you been at your current school?

3. What is your current role there?

4. How long have you been involved in the implementation of positive behavior supports and restorative practices at your school?

5. What elements of positive behavior supports are implemented in your school?

6. What elements of restorative practices are implemented in your school?

7. How have the use of these supports and practices influenced your school's culture as it relates to student-to-student interactions?

8. How have the use of these supports and practices influenced your school's culture as it relates to student-to-educator and educator-to-student interactions?

9. In what way, if any, has the use of positive behavior supports and restorative practices influenced your professional efficacy, which is to say how has it influenced the level of confidence that you have related to your ability to do your job?

10. In what ways, if any, has the use of positive behavior supports and restorative practices affected your job satisfaction?

11. What elements of restorative practices and positive behavior supports have worked best?

12. Do you have any suggestions for school looking to integrate restorative practices or positive behavior supports into their schools?

13. Is there anything else that you'd like to add related to the use of positive behavior supports and/or restorative practices in your school?

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