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RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN EDUCATION PRACTICES AS INTERVENTIONS THAT SUPPORT TEACHERS IN CREATING A BETTER CLIMATE AND CULTURE IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of a Masters of Arts in Education.

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Behavior management in schools is constantly changing. School-wide and classroom behavior processes are striving to find and create ways to reduce negative or unwelcomed behavior while increasing the school's climate and culture. Schools committed to following Restorative Justice practices have reported stronger school community, reduced suspensions, and increased problem-solving skills during conflicts. This capstone uses a combination of research, assessment, testimonials, and pilot school studies to help answer the research question, *What restorative justice in education interventions can be used to support teachers in creating better climate and culture in their classrooms?* The research concludes Restorative Justice in Education practices is successful when used as interventions to create a better climate and culture in classrooms.

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CHAPTER ONE

Capstone Project Introduction

"Our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives."-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chapter Overview

I am a white, middle-class, female behavior interventionists with a background in special education. I support a magnet school in a diverse demographic suburban elementary school with an increasing amount of behavioral concerns, issues, incidents, and referrals to special education. The more the demographics, social inequalities, and trauma continue to go unaddressed the more schools are faced with challenging behaviors. School shootings are increasing at an alarming rate, more students are being referred to special education, mental health issues are going undiagnosed and treated (Baird, Roellke, & Zeifman, 2017). All of these issues are falling onto the responsibilities of the school system, in particular, the teachers and drive my interest in exploring the following question, What restorative practices interventions can be used to support teachers in creating a better climate and culture in their classrooms?

Past Experiences that Influenced the Choice of My Capstone Project

My past experience in large homogeneous suburbs, support my belief that there has been very little effort in addressing, supporting, mentoring and providing professional development to address the issues of student behaviors, equity and proactive strategies to reduce suspensions, and looking at teaching how and what we expect from students rather than assuming they know

what and how to behave in school. These issues are finding their way outside of the urban school and into the suburbs. According to the district's website, the school has experienced a 1.4 percent increase in enrollment. The school has also documented a 29% increase in students in a center-based special education program.

Approximately 14.1 percent of the enrollment receive special education services. Students of color now represent 34.2 percent of total enrollment up 1.4 percent from AY 2017/2018 and 15.2 percent that is more than a decade ago. In the 2017/2018 school year, 24.8 percent of students were receiving free and reduced lunch, more than double what it was 10 years ago. Approximately six percent (6.2) of our English Learner students receive services. As part of a school-wide intervention team and lead teacher of the climate and culture team, I have observed teachers with limited classroom management skills, strategies, and skills set to change behavior and increase connectedness and still maintain the rigor within the academic expectations of their schools.

The changing demographics of schools where I have worked has created major problems. When working in diverse school my experience is that many children, especially students of color, are being sent to the office, a behavior support classroom, and/or suspended for classroom related behaviors. Dealing with what is viewed as negative classroom behaviors in this manner is extremely harmful to students because the very minute they are out of class means they are not learning.

With limited professional development and practices in place to help teachers better connect and communicate with students and families to repair and restore relationships in schools, I have observed and noted the need to find interventions or strategies that increase

positive teacher to student relationships. Which leads me to explore the question: *What Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) practices can be used as interventions to support teachers in creating better climate and culture in their classrooms?* This will be done by creating a Google site that will assist me in my role as a behavioral interventionist. The site will help me support fellow colleagues increase their climate and culture inside their classrooms and provide resources for teachers to implement RJE practices in their classrooms.

My Why

My heart and passion for education are with the lives of students that need us the most. I chose to go into education to make a difference. Casas (2017) summarized my educational philosophy when he wrote "we are blessed every day with the opportunity to help change the course of someone's life with our words, our actions, and our belief in their abilities. By changes our perspectives, we can change lives" (p. 16). To me, this quote embodies so many special education students, especially students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. I am working with and witnessing students who struggle to be in school and comply with school expectations in my current position. In my personal and professional experiences, many of the children that are repeat "offenders" of bad choices/decisions are students of color and or students with significant trauma or difficulty managing emotions. Something needs to change in order for our school system to change the trajectory many of our students are facing if they do not find ways to connect, repair and restore their relationships. In order for schools to tackle this significant issue is to change the mindset of the teachers teaching these students. Through my fourteen years in the teaching field, I have witnessed teachers struggling to relate and or connect with students that are different than them. Many of the teachers I have worked with share the mindset that students

are choosing to act in a negative way. In turn, teachers respond in a punitive or consequence-driven discipline approach.

According to Smith, Fisher, & Frey (2015), punitive consequences or getting even to getting well is an ineffective approach. The authors acknowledged that students are not learning from their mistakes, rather, they are learning how to hide them in the future. Our current school system needs to start to rethink how to handle negative behaviors. My capstone project is based on the premise that teachers and administrators need to start asking ourselves, *what can do differently, how can we increase classroom connectedness, what supports do teachers need in order to create a more positive classroom climate and culture, and what interventions can be used to teach conflict-resolution, problem-solving skills?*

As a teacher with fourteen years of experience, my assumption is that until school systems develop new ways of handling these behaviors, restore, and repair relationships with students and the community, then academics will always come in behind social and emotional needs. From my perspective, restorative justice in education offers a different mindset and approach to zero-tolerance or authoritative discipline approach. Casas's (2017) idea that "we are blessed every day with an opportunity to help change the course of someone's life with our words, our actions, and our belief in their abilities. By changes our perspectives, we can change lives" (p. 16) described the shift in mindset that teachers and administrators need in order to effectively reach every student.

As I continue to grow and develop as a mother, teacher, and citizen, the more this quote and mindset speak to me. This way of looking at student behavior has directed my passion and incorporated other important aspects of education such as; equality, equity, culturally

responsiveness, and the importance of effective professional development and focused me on the current research question. In addition to my experience as a teacher, my own background and experience as a parent are powerful forces for me in addressing my research question.

Background and Personal Mission

I am a white, female, middle-class, European-American. I grew up in the Midwest with two parents. My mother is a special education teacher. I remember as a young child going with her to school. From a young age, I noticed differences between people but was? taught to see and interact with people as people. My parents instilled the concept of we are all the same underneath but matter how different we are on the outside. When enrolling in college in 1998, I had to decide what direction to take my life.

This was an internal fight. I did not want to be like my mother (as many teenagers do not want to be like their parents). However, in the end, I chose the same career path as her. Because of my upbringing, special education was a great place for me to develop my gifts and quickly found special education is my passion. Upon graduation, I had already accepted a teaching job at an affluent, predominately white upper-class elementary school. The need to address, manage, and/or change behaviors was not an issue. As our school community demographics changed with an increase in families of color, foreign and immigrant families enrolling as English learners, families receiving assistance, and students affected by trauma we saw more referrals to special education with different needs than what was previously serviced. Teachers and administrators at this school were no longer just educating upper-class predominantly white families.

Our school had an increase in the number of students being referred to and qualifying for special education services, increasing mental health issues, and the changes in our demographics of our student body. Our school saw an increase in the amount of disruptive, aggressive, intrinsic and extrinsic behavior. However, our school struggled to find intervention or ways to reduce incidents and increase connectedness. Throughout this time, I found myself advocating for change in the way schools handle behavior. I took a leadership role in our building: lead teacher in Equity and Climate and Connectedness.

In 2016, I was given an opportunity to become a special education coordinator at an all-black elementary charter school in a large metropolitan city in the upper midwest and immediately took the job. This opportunity spoke to my passions; proactive strategies in dealing with behavior, response to inventions models at a school-wide level, connecting with families on a deeper level and providing alternatives to special education for boys that may be later considered for special education under the emotional behavioral disability category. This is the *why* behind my passion. My role was to advocate with others teachers the idea that all students are capable of learning, they just need the right environment to learn, with the right people supporting them.

The teaching staff at the charter school was all black with the exception of myself. The all-black staff included scholar advocates or paraprofessionals, teachers, administration, school board members, bus drivers, food services, and custodial staff. I started to see that not everyone views education in the same way. The biggest eye-opener was the disparity of education in an inner-city school when compared to a predominately white affluent suburb school and how disenfranchised the families were with the traditional school model.

In particular, students at the all-black charter school in the inner city, that struggled playing school by the rules of a white middle-class teacher, students of color, trauma impacted, and low-socioeconomic status were being treated differently. This crushed my heart. I encountered several situations where my son was being referred to the principal, sent out of class, notes sent home, etc due to his behavior which I believe is directly linked to his teachers not understanding his culture (my children as biracial-white and black). When I ask the teachers, what are you doing to connect with him, what interventions have you tried, what proactive systems do you have in place? Most of their responses were that is not my job, he needs to learn how to play school by our rules. In my experience, this teacher mindset is not uncommon. However, the blame is not solely on teachers. I firmly believe that if teachers had access to effective and continuous professional development on how to create restorative justices practices in their classroom things would change.

Rationale for My Capstone Project

Restorative justice in education is a fairly new approach to the ever-changing practices in education. Ravitich and Loveless (2000), described how education is largely impacted by the federal and state governments as well as society and therefore is forever changing and adapting to new philosophies. These changes could include the way teachers instruct (technology-based) or standard *sit and get*, curriculum models endorsed (Common Core, standards-based reporting), or inclusionary practices. The changing nature of education increases the demands placed on teachers.

In addition to new demands on teachers, our societal expectations and experiences are constantly changing and evolving. This capstone project is based on the assumption that our

education system requires a complete reform in its disciplinary practices. In my professional life, I hear teachers asking for effective professional development to increase student achievement. I have discovered from my personal and professional experience, the best way to affect student achievement is through the connections between teachers and students. Restorative practices have proven to be effective in increasing emotional literacy, healing, restoring and repairing relationships between all individuals (Zehr, 2002). Thus, the importance of using restorative practices within the school and community settings to build better relationships.

Potential Impact of My Project

As I reflect on current and past response to intervention practices and systems, I pause to wonder, *what makes these systems effective, sustainable, and meaningful to the teachers?* This project develops, guides, and provides effective interventions in both proactive, preventative, and reactive scenarios. I want all school personnel to feel comfortable to acknowledge the needs for changes in classroom management and ask for help with students that are struggling to connect, problem-solve or lack social skills. By implementing a response to intervention model (RTI) with effective strategies and support with implementation and documentation, all school personnel will know the effectiveness of restorative practices, understand the rationale of why restorative practices work, how to implement restorative practices in their classrooms, how to manage the restorative practices, collect data on restorative practices, and share testimonials.

The Google site developed from my capstone project impacted my current school assignment and has the ability to potentially impact at a district level. It also was used as a resource to other colleagues and professionals outside of my school assignment. The Google site

was an initial foundational resource for schools that need to improve teacher to student relationships and decrease the number of negative behaviors currently in the public school systems. This site will the potential to be used at a district level for professional development, professional learning communities, and as a response to intervention for behaviors. In the near future, it would be beneficial to pair the site with professional development classes on "live or how to facilitate" restorative practices with immediate feedback.

Chapter Summary

My passion is to support all staff in creating and developing effective classroom management systems and strategies, increasing positive climate and culture, and using successful behavior interventions. The Google site will be available to all school staff and to other colleagues in different districts. My educational philosophy mirrors those of restorative justice in education, facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environments in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity and worth of all (Evans and Vaandering, 2016). "We are blessed every day with opportunity to help change the course of someone's life with our words, our actions, and our belief in their abilities. By changes our perspectives, we can change lives" (Casas, 2017, p.16) is answered through Evans and Vaandering (2016) Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) definition. This project answered the question, *What RJE interventions can be used to support teachers in creating better climate and culture in their classrooms?* by providing educators with resources, strategies, video links, podcasts, and classroom tools.

Chapter Two provides a literature review of the history of RJ. It will also introduce and examine informal and formal restorative justice practice interventions that have been proven

successful at increasing school and classroom climate and culture. When used appropriately these interventions can also teach social/emotional and problem-solving skills.

Selected informal restorative practices (preventative interventions) were chosen, based on the literature review, to be effective in improving classroom management skills and school and classroom climate. Formal restorative practice (after harm has been done) were chosen, based on the literature review, to be effective in an elementary school focused on keeping students in class and learning.

These informal and formal interventions and approaches are the foundation of Chapter three, which explains the capstone project in greater detail. Specific interventions from Chapter Two aid in developing resources for teachers to use in a school-wide intervention system for behavior. Chapter Three provides an explanation and provides the resources and methods used to develop and implement the interventions at a primary level. A long-term plan for implementation and maintenance of interventions are also explained.

Chapter Four concludes with potential areas of difficulty and or concern. I know that with providing school personnel with successful strategies, interventions, and a mentoring process, we will change the way we handle or view disruptive behaviors in our schools, and start to teach every student according to what they need.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview of Chapter Two

Through my fourteen years as a special education teacher, the need for schools to connect with students in a positive, authentic, and meaningful way in both good and bad times is pressing. Schools can achieve this through the use of restorative practices by asking: *How can behavioral interventionists use restorative justice in education (RJE) practices as interventions to create a more positive teacher-student relationship.* As previously stated, the outcome of this project is to review, describe, and provide interventions of a restorative practice approach in the classroom. In order to accomplish this goal, current literature has been reviewed to assess the most valuable interventions to build a restorative and positive classroom climate and culture. This chapter included a short history of the restorative practice approach. Which will then be followed by the importance of a positive and relationship-driven classroom mindset. Then, will be concluded with successful intervention strategies by using a restorative practice approach.

History of Restorative Justice (RJ) Practices:

Howard Zehr (2002), a leader in restorative justice (RJ), defined restorative justice as "a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense, and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as

right as possible" (p. 37). Building a positive climate and culture within our schools and classroom has become increasingly difficult over the past decade.

Prior to the creation of RJ practices, the classroom was often an authoritarian, punitive and authoritative learning environment, standard instruction of *sit and get*, and where all the power was concentrated by the teacher and or administration (Smith et al., 2015). Misbehavior was dealt with by handing out consequences without conversation or teaching the student a replacement skill or addressing why they are acting the way they are. In addition, the misbehavior had little impact on creating long-term changes in students' behavior, such as decreasing or eliminating negative behavior or replacing the negative with an explicit taught appropriate skill (Smith et al., 2015).

Restorative Justice (RJ) Principles

Zehr (2002) believed that RJ is based on an old, common-sense understanding of wrongdoing. The author described how the idea of wrongdoing varies across cultures and that RJ is most common in traditional societies. Zher (2002) found that various cultures embody connectedness when harm is being addressed. For example, Zehr (2002) described how for the Maori (New Zealand culture), connectedness is communicated by *whakapapa;* for the Navajo (Indian culture), *hozho*, and for many Africans, the Bantu word *ubuntu.* Though the word meanings differ slightly, Zehr (2002) stated that the intent is alike: all things are connected to each other in a web of relationships. Brown (2018) added RJ values have been linked to the philosophies and practices of Indigenous peoples worldwide. Brown (2018) used the examples of Navajo peacemaking; Ubuntu philosophy in Africa, spiritual beliefs shared by many religions; Asian conflict resolution; and Maori ways of living in the community. Nicholl reasoned (as cited

in Morrison & Vaandering, 2012) that restorative values are "about healing rather than hurting, moral learning, community participation, and community caring, respectful dialogue, forgiveness, responsibility, apology, and making amends" (p. 75). Thus, "when the web is disrupted, we are all affected" (Zehr 2002, p. 35). RJ is built upon values, morals, and ethics. Morrison (2006) added to that belief with the idea that RJ is built upon the founding principles of freedom, democracy, and community, which is the heart of a responsible citizen. In the early 1970's, more societies, countries, regions have implemented RJ practices in their criminal justice system, juvenile justice, and educational systems. RJ principles and values make this approach both relevant and flexible.

Essential Components of Restorative Justice in Education (RJE)

Evans & Vaandering, (2016), described how RJ has primarily been a grassroots movement in practice, rather than theory, driving its growth. They further stated, this has allowed for the development of intricate practice, but as restorative justice education (RJE) matured, early articulated theory became necessary for RJ practice to be effective and sustainable. Zehr (2002) asserted the essential components of restorative justice are; harms and needs, obligations, and engagement.

Brown (2018) characterized the foundational concepts of RJE as; building and maintaining healthy relationships, creating just and equitable learning environments, and repairing harm and transforming conflict. Both Brown (2018) and Zehr's (2002) concepts are interconnected and share similar conceptual beliefs. According to Brown (2018), "restorative justice in education means creating a restorative justice environment-using restorative practice to

create a truly just and equitable environment for learning" (p. 49). Amstutz & Mullet (2005) added to the definition of RJ:

> Restorative justice promotes values and principles that use inclusive, collaborative approaches for being in community. These approaches validate the experiences and needs of everyone within the community, particularly those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or harmed. These approaches allow us to act and respond in ways that are healing rather than alienating or coercive. (p. 15)

Their definition of RJ had implications for problem-solving and discipline in a school setting (Amstutz & Mullet 2005).

Smith, Fisher, & Frey, (2015) described implications for RJ in the school setting by suggesting that all human societies, including school settings, tend to thrive when they develop rules to structure interactions, ensure fairness and create a safe climate for all. These authors continued to theorize, our classrooms are no different, and the rules we use with children tend to fall into the same three categories. The categories are structured interaction (raise your hand), ensure fairness (take turns), and create a safe climate for all (ask for help).

Students want teachers who create boundaries and provide consequences when appropriate while balancing maintaining a positive and respectful relationship (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006).

Traditional Discipline vs. Restorative Justice (RJ) Approach

Smith et al. (2015) asserted we all have been wronged. Sometimes these wrongs are fairly minor in the big scheme of things; other times they are significant and painful. The authors highlighted the importance of not discounting the harm that students, staff, teachers, administrators, and parents can cause to others as it can be very damaging to relationships and

thus compromise students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. Smith et al. (2015) also recognized that when wrongs occur, individuals demand justice-but is how justice is defined that matters.

According to Smith et al. (2015), many students in schools today have a can't-do attitude. Every day, students are being told to follow the expectations, be quiet, raise your hand, stop talking, don't do that, stop that, and more (Smith et al. 2015). Schools need to shift this practice and work towards creating a school where students are encouraged to do what is not allowed by granting them permission to do what was previously seen as not possible based on policy or regulations (Casas, 2017). Casas interjected, by being intentional in our interactions with students and learning to understand, acknowledge, and appreciate student goals, schools will start to recognize the accolades of those who have risen above their adversity and personal challenges to reach their fullest potential in school, behavior, citizenship, and attendance (Casas, 2017). How schools respond to the adversity, personal experiences or trauma matters. Smith et al. (2015) suggested the appropriate way to handle mistakes and misbehaviors is to provide students opportunities to learn from their mistakes and to restore any damaged relationships with peers, teachers, and school staff. As cited by Smith et al. (2015), figure 1 was created by the San Francisco Unified School District illustrates the difference between the traditional and restorative approach to discipline.

Traditional versus Restorative Approach to Discipline

Traditional Approach	Restorative Approach
● Rules are violated ● Resolution is based on confirming guilt ● Ownership is defined as punishment ● Resolution is guided towards the offender; victim is ignored ● Outcome is lessened by rules and purpose ● Offender is not able to repair the relationship or offer remorse	● Students and people are violated ● Justice acknowledges needs and obligations ● Ownership is defined as understanding the effects of the situation and repairing the harm ● Everyone involved has direct roles in the justice process ● Offenders are responsible for their choices, they have to repair harm and work toward a positive outcome ● Opportunity is made available to express remorse and or make amends

Note. Adapted from *Better Than Carrots or Sticks*, by D. Smith et al., 2015

Smith et al. (2015) further added restorative practices are predicated on the positive relationships that students and adults have with one another. Simply said, it is harder for students to act defiantly or disrespectfully toward adults who clearly care about them and their future (Smith et al., 2015, p. 4). A whole-school relational framework has been developed based on three leverage points outlined by the healthcare model (Morrison, 2007).

Morrison (2007), characterized the restorative whole-school model off of the framework of a public health triangle that included three elements labeled by; primary (universal), secondary (targeted to specific individuals and groups), and tertiary (intensive) practices.

Morrison (2007) defined primary restorative practices as those involving the entire school community and aimed at establishing a values ethic, as well as skills base, for developing relational ecologies and resolving differences in respectful and caring ways.

Secondary restorative practices address specific behaviors that disrupt the harmony and social relations of classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) described "tertiary restorative practices as most intensive, often responding to serious harm, and involve all those affected (including families, professionals, fellow students, and other affected) in a face-to-face restorative justice process" (p. 144). It is imperative when conducting secondary restorative practices, trained facilitators are present and the process is followed (IIRP, 2018).

Morrison & Vaandering (2012) stated the primary or universal practices-the board base of the triangle involve reaffirming relationships by developing a value-based ethos that builds social and emotional skills. The secondary or targeted practices, forming the middle layer of the triangle, involved repairing relationships through facilitated and supported dialogue. The tertiary or intensive practices that respond to a specific case-the small top of the triangle-involve rebuilding relationships through intensive facilitated dialogue that includes a broad social network (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Morrison (2007) concluded with a broader vision that characterized RJ and responsive regulation, not just as a mechanism for discipline but also as a mechanism to achieve social justice across all school outcomes, including safety, health, and academic.

Hence, schools have evolved to implementing a RJ framework that is clearer in its awareness of the social and emotional foundation of the paradigm, specifically that human beings are relational and justice is understood broadly as "honoring the inherent worth of all and is enacted through relationship" (Vaandering, 2011, p. 324). Their definition complimented

other social justice definitions such as that of Schriberg, Wynne, Briggs, Bartucci, & Lombardo (2011),

Schriberg et al. (2011) applied social justice to school psychology and identified it as an overarching framework centered around: (a) ensuring that all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and (b) protecting the rights and opportunities for all. This groundwork had been further developed as a framework for identifying and building the links behind essential education ideas (McClutskey, 2011, as cited in Morrison & Vaandering, 2012) and democratic citizenship (Bickmore, 2011, as cited in Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). This is was a significant paradigm change for K-12 school from being rule-based institutions whose purpose is social control to being institutions that nurture social engagement (Elliott, 2011; Morrison, 2011; Zehr, 2005). Smith et al. (2015) described how traditional school discipline practices are considered separate from the academic mission of the school. By contrast, RJ practices are interwoven into every interaction in the building.

Mindset of Effective Classroom Management

The belief that intelligence, talents, and skills are flexible and can be developed is not a new concept (Ricci, 2017). Ricci suggested the idea that intelligence can grow in both children and adults has seen more popularity due to the work of Dr. Carol Dweck, and her 2006 book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.* Dweck (2006) described a belief system that asserted that intelligence and talent are flexible and can be developed. She coined the term growth mindset to describe this belief system (Dweck, 2006). Ricci furthered Dweck's work to a school setting by describing how "Learners with a growth mindset believe that with perseverance, resiliency, and a variety of strategies, they can learn and improve" (Ricci, 2017, p. 3). An

intricate point of a growth mindset is built upon the process of learning, not looking smart or acing the class (Dweck, 2006). Ricci (2017) insisted

> an educator with a growth mindset believe that with effort, hard work, and application of strategies from the learner, all students can demonstrate significant growth and therefore all students deserve challenging instructional opportunities. Add to this belief an effective teacher armed with instructional tools that differentiate, respond to learners' needs, and nurture critical thinking processes, and you have a recipe for optimum student learning. (p.3)

The opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset. Dweck (2006) described a fixed mindset as a belief that intelligence, skills, and talents are something you are born with and cannot be changed. She continued by saying "A person with a fixed mindset might truly believe that he or she has a predetermined amount of intelligence, skills, or talents" (Dweck, 2016, p. 15-17). Ricci (2017) further alluded to, an educator's mindset directly influences how a child feels about themselves and how they see themselves as learners. Ricci (2017) further asserted, a student's mindset directly affects how they face academic challenges.

RJ practices were built on creating and maintaining healthy and positive relationships (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). In order for RJ practices to be effective, teachers must be open and have a growth mindset (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). The willingness and growth mindset is particularly important in effective classroom management (Smith et al. 2015). RJ practitioners, such a Smith et al. (2015) supported the definition from Cassetta & Sawyer (2013) and defined the classroom as being "about building relationships with students and teaching social skills along with academic skills" (p. 16). Smith et al. (2015) proposed two aspects of an effective

learning environment: “relationships (specifically the range of interpersonal skills necessary to maintain healthy relationships) and high-quality education” (2015, p. 2) They believed when students have strong, trusting relationships with the adults and peers in their school, and when their instruction and lessons are interesting relevant, it is harder for them to misbehave.

Belinda Hopkins (2011) defined relational and restorative pedagogies as methods of teaching that develop relationships and build connections with one’s self, others, and the curriculum. Hopkins (2011) characterized relational pedagogy as using language that “maintains a connection, respect, and mutual understanding” (p. 15). Hopkins (2011) explained when a disconnection occurs, “reconnection is encouraged at the earliest possible opportunity, using restorative processes” (p. 15). Too often, as noted by Smith et al. (2015) schools serve to tear students down. Because of this mindset, parents and educators are now participating in developing school and district climate and culture goals. The National Center for School Climate defined climate as the “quality and character of school life” (https://www.schoolclimate.org/school-climate, n.d., 3). Smith et al. (2015) summarized climate as;

> ...it isn’t something separate from the rest of the school; rather, it emanates from the relationship that exists between and among staff students, family, and community. It is affected by the way discipline is handled in the school-how problems are addressed. (p. 17)

As contended by Smith et al. (2015), school climate is informed by the manner in which teachers manage their classrooms.

> Positive school climate is associated with a myriad of achievement, efficacy, and health measures, such as higher mathematics achievement for K-3 students, higher academic optimism among teachers, lower body mass index scores for elementary students, and lower smoking rates among high school students (as cited in Smith et al. 2015).

Listed below are documented reasons by Smith et al. (2015) on why it is advantageous to focus attention and effort on improving a school's climate using the restorative approach:

- because you care about student achievement
- because you care about students' civil rights
- because you care about students' emotional and psychological health
- because you know that students can't learn adequately if they're not in school
- because you are alarmed at the unintended messages that we send to students using a traditional approach to discipline
- because you know we are raising a generation of people who will one day make decisions about our own well-being later in life (pp. 17-18).

Whatever the motivation, it is in society's best interest to create safe places to work, teach, and learn (Brown, 2018).

School climate can be improved by schools creating positive climates that focus on prevention, developing and maintaining clear, appropriate and consistent school-wide expectations and a process to address student behaviors that ensure fairness, equity, and constant reflection (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Amstutz & Mullet (2005) stressed the importance of having a growth mindset when implementing restorative practices to increase school climate. They further narrated that

> It is important to acknowledge that we are all on a continuum in life with what we see and what we believe. It is the same with restorative justice approaches within schools, The idea of working on a total-school approach, one that includes awareness, education, structural changes, and ethos-building, may seem overwhelming to educators They suggest adopting the saying "start with what you do and do it better." They conclude by offering the belief "when we celebrate what's right, we will have the energy, creativity, and inspiration to work at changing what is wrong" (p.79).

Informal Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) Practices in Schools

Schools that are more highly invested in peacemaking and peacebuilding than peacekeeping seek to transform their efforts by making them part of the explicit, rather than hidden, curriculum (Bickmore, 2011, as cited in Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Empowerment is at the center of RJ practices (Smith et al. 2015). RJ practices were categorized into two groups; informal and formal. Informal practices included affective statements that communicate people's feelings, as well as affective questions that cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. Impromptu RJ conferences, groups, and circles are somewhat more structured but do not require the elaborate preparation needed for formal conferences (IIRP, 2018). As RJ practices became more formal, they involve more people, require more planning and time, and are more structured and complete. Although a formal RJ process might have a dramatic impact, informal RJ practices had a cumulative impact because they are part of everyday life (McCold & Wachtel, 2001, as cited in IIRP, 2018).

Affective statements and questions. Affective statements are the most informal type of response on the "Restorative Practices Continuum" (Costello, B, Wachtel, J., & Wachtel T,

2009). McCold & Wachtel (2001 as cited in IIRP, 2018) suggested informal RJ practices that include affective affect statements, which communicate people's feelings, as well as affective questions, which cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. Affective statements and questions develop a child's sense of agency and identity (Smith et al. 2015). CORE Education (http://core-ed.org/, n. d.) described student agency when learning involves the activity and the initiative of the learner, more than the inputs that are transmitted to the learner from the teacher, from the curriculum, the resources and so forth (http://core-ed.org/, n. d.). Lawson (2014) referred to learner identity as how an individual feels about himself/herself as a learner and the extent to which he/she describes himself/herself as a learner. Smith et al. (2015) emphasized the language that is used in the classroom can either nurture students' social and emotional development or break it down. Peter Johnston (2004) researched the use of language in the classroom and how it has influenced the work done in schools. Johnston (2004) theorized about language as constitutive and positional, meaning it "creates realities . . . identifies . . . and position(s) people in relation to one another" (2004, p. 4). Smith et al. (2015) continued, the language we use influences how students see themselves and, in turn, how others view them. They further stated, "student's senses of identity and agency are crucial to restorative practices because they influence the extent to which students can solve problems, assume ownership of situations, and take action to make improvements" (Smith et al. 2015, p. 87). In addition, Costello et al. (2009) added affective statements are some of the easiest and most useful tools for building a restorative classroom.

Identity statements allow students to explore themselves and how they want to portray themselves. (Smith et al. 2015) proposed when students are asked identity-building questions

that contain labels ("I wonder if, as a writer, you're ready for this?"), they are provided with an identity and challenge to enhance themselves. A teacher in a classroom might employ an effective statement when a student has misbehaved, letting the student know how he or she has been affected by the student's behavior: "When you disrupt the class, I feel sad" or "disrespected" or "disappointed." Hearing this, the student learns how his or her behavior is affecting others (Harrison, 2007, as cited in IIRP, 2018). Or, the teacher may use an affective question, such as, "Who do you think has been affected by what you just did?" and then follow-up with "How do you think they've been affected?" In answering such questions, instead of simply being punished, the student has a chance to think about his or her behavior, make amends and change the behavior in the future (Morrison, 2003). Costello et al. (2009) affirmed by stating when a student's behavior causes concern, the more specific and emotive you can be, the better. This helps to separate the deed from the doer by sharing that you care about the student.

Costello et al. (2009) theorized affective statements can be used to acknowledge success, hard work, collaboration or any other desirable behavior. Costello et al. (2009) insisted the more specific about the students' behavior and the emotions felt, the better. Agency statements provide students with the confidence to act (Smith et al. 2015). They further stated statements such as "I can tell you studied hard for this biology test" and "That hard work is really paying off for you" signal to students that effort bears results (Smith et al. 2015, p. 87). "By comparison, statements such as "You're so smart," although well intended, can paralyze learners by implying that intelligence is innate" (Smith et al. 2015, p. 88). This is known as a fixed mindset (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Costello et al. (2009) agreed by saying "understanding and using such statements

can help foster an immediate change in the dynamic between teacher and student' (p. 12). They further alluded, when a teacher tells a student how they feel, the teacher is humanizing themselves to the students, who often perceive teachers as distinct from themselves (p. 12). The delivery of affective statements and questions is essential. Costello et al. (2009) reasoned students will be more receptive to affective statements and questions if they are delivered privately. It is important to note that when used appropriately, "restorative practices can move the situation from anger to a more productive resolution" (Costello et al. 2009, p. 20).

The use of affective statements and questions whether agency or identity help to build a relationship based on students' new image of the teacher as someone who cares and has feelings, rather than as a distant authority figure" (Costello et al. 2009, p. 13).

Another informal restorative practice is class meetings. Class meetings can be helpful in developing unity amongst in the classroom (Smith et al. 2015). Adding class meetings could provide an established way of reaching classroom agreements and working through situations that arise Vance (2013). Class meetings are typically student-led, which helps learners hold ownership over their engagement in discussion and validate their voice as a valuable contribution to the class (Leachman & Victor, 2003). As Potter & Davis (2003) noted, research shows that implementing class meetings three times a week for eight weeks "increased students' skills in relation to listening attentively, complimenting and appreciating others, showing respect for others, and building a sense of community" (p. 88).

Class meetings. Smith et al. (2015) do not recommend using class meetings for conflict resolution among students. Conferences are where conflict resolution is addressed. Smith et al. (2015) do recommend using class meetings as a strategy to discuss issues openly with the entire

class. They also stated the importance of rules for class meetings. The rules should ensure that everyone's voice is heard. The teacher is to be the facilitator, only interjecting questions for the class to discuss. Students can be facilitators once they are comfortable with the routines and rules (Smith et al. 2015). The morning meetings do address basic social and emotional skills. The purpose of morning meetings is to build a classroom community. Smith et al. (2015) supported the need to change how classroom meetings are run having stated, "elementary teachers routinely have daily class meetings in the morning that usually involve the teacher and students greeting each other, sharing news, and conducting daily routines such as noting the weather or date" (p. 90). Grant & Davis (2012) added: "class meetings build connectedness and affiliation within the group, thereby strengthening relationships that might be tested throughout the year" (p. 130). Smith et al. (2015), expressed the importance of having a consistent agenda when creating class meetings.

When students recognize each other, they like school more and tend to behave in ways that are respectful toward the community, resulting in sage, productive learning (Landau & Gathercoal, 2000). Smith et al.'s (2015) studies suggested that class meetings ensure that learning is really happening throughout the day. They further verified that "informal processes allow students' worries and fears to be addressed so that they can focus on the lesson during instructional time. An investment in class meetings can result in a peaceful classroom climate where both learning, both social and academic flourishes" (p. 92).

Classroom circles. The next informal RJ practice was informal classroom circles. According to Brown (2018), circles are considered a universal intervention that is both preventative and reparative; it can be used for everyday relationship building and also for more

severe and intense such as bullying (p. 50) Smith et al. (2015), believed that the use of circles to facilitate discussion is arguably the most distinctive element of RJ practices (2015). Costello et al. (2009) also agreed and added circles are symbols of a community. They further stated, "circles can be used as a response to wrong-doing, they are also very effective as a proactive process for building social capital and creating classroom norms (2009, p. 23). Informal circles differ from class meetings in their arrangements. Circles consist of chairs arranged facing inward, without desks or tables that often are seen as visual or psychological barriers (Smith et al. 2015). Smith et al (2015) implied that the physical arrangement influences students to expect a high level of interaction, including listening. Rosenfield, Lambert, & Black, (1985) verified off task-behavior decrease significantly in circle arrangement, perhaps due to an increased level of accountability of the students' to the group.

The roots, values, and Indigenous teachings used in restorative informal circles, dissected by Boyes-Watson, Riestenberg, & Pranis, (2015) have two components: 1) values that nurture good relationships, and 2) key teachings common among Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories and consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them.

After the chairs have been arranged, the teacher poses a question and the student responds, in turn, going around the circle (Costello et al. 2009). They also suggested using a "talking piece," a symbolic object that is passed from person to person, designating the person who has the right to speak (2009). Brown (2018) added the "talking piece" is passed clockwise so that all have the opportunity to speak and listen. Brown furthered by saying, "circles involve

a number of rounds in an orderly and reflective process that reinforces the values of restorative justice" (2016, p. 51).

Types of informal circles included sequential and non-sequential circles, fishbowls, and inside-outside circles (Costello et al. 2010).

Sequential and non-sequential circles. The International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP, 2018) wrote circles may use a sequential format. During a sequential circle (Costello et al. 2010) stated how one person speaks at a time, and the opportunity to speak moves in one direction around the circle. They also noted how only the person who is holding the talking piece has the right to speak (Costello et al. 2010). Mirsky, Roca, Inc, also noted how the circle practice and the talking piece have roots in ancient and indigenous practices (as cited in Costello et al. 2010). Sequential circles have a fixed order for member participation, and each student is encouraged to participate (Smith et al. 2015). The IIRP (2018) added the sequential circle is typically structured around topics or questions raised by the circle facilitator. Smith et al. (2015) supported the IIRP and highlighted the teacher's role is that of the facilitator, posing a question for the group to consider. Although most circle traditions rely on a facilitator or circle keeper who guides but does not control (Pranis, Stuart & Wedge, 2003), a circle does not always need a leader. One approach is simply for participants to speak sequentially, moving around the circle as many times as necessary, until all have said what they want to say. In this case, all of the participants take responsibility for maintaining the integrity and the focus of the circle (IIRP, 2018). Smith et al. (2015), characterized sequential circles as a way to check in with students at the beginning of a lesson or as an exit ticket at the end. Informal sequential circles are also useful in approaching sensitive topics, such as feelings about an important exam (Smith et al.

2015). Circles also may be used instead of a formal conference to respond to wrongdoing or a conflict or problem. (Costello et al. 2010).

The IIRP chronicled nonsequential circles as a more freely structured than a sequential circle. The conversation may proceed from one person to another without a fixed order. Problem-solving circles, for example, may simply be focused around an issue that is to be solved but allows anyone to speak. One person in the group may record the group's ideas or decisions. Students who are truly engaged in the topic have more time to speak in depth about it is affirmed by Smith et al. (2015).

Fishbowls. Fishbowls is another example of an informal RJ circle. Smith et al. (2015) explained fishbowls as highly effective for skill building and discussing sensitive topics that require active listening. The IIRP (2018) described fishbowls as "an inner circle of active participants who may discuss an issue with a sequential approach or engage in a non-sequential activity such as problem-solving. Outside the inner circle are observers arranged in as many concentric circles as are needed to accommodate the group" (IIRP, 2018). Smith et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of maintaining the membership of the outer and inner circle. They further reasoned students are invited to leave the inner circle when they are done speaking, thus leaving an open chair for a member of the outer circle to take (Smith et al. 2015).

Inside-outside circles. The last example of informal RJ circles researched was the inside-outside circle. Smith et al. (2015) compared inside-outside circles to fishbowls. Like fishbowls, inside-outside circles include a small circle encased by a larger one, but in this example students in the inner circle face out and partner with a student from the larger circle. The IIRP (2018) indicated at the teacher's prompt, the partners talk about the assigned topic for a

few minutes. Next, another prompt is given and the students in the inner circle move clockwise, ensuring everyone will work together. Smith et al. proposed inside-outside circles for mentorship, and math instruction as examples for classroom use.

"Circles help students build and sustain trust with one another to solve problems together as a community" (Smith et al. 2015, p. 97). The community can be weakened if a few students dominate the discussion. A peacemaking circle is a way of bringing people together in which; everyone is respected, everyone gets a chance to talk without interruption, participants explain themselves by telling their story, everyone is equal, and emotional aspects of individual experiences are welcomed (Pranis, 2005). Peacemaking circles are used when two or more people need to make a decision together, had a disagreement, need to address an experience that resulted in harm to someone, want to work together as a team, want to celebrate, want to share troubles, or want to learn from each other (Pranis, 2005). Boyes-Watson & Pranis (2015) concluded and summarized circles as needing to be carefully constructed and in an intentional communicative space. They reiterated the process is rooted in an ancient philosophy, "which manifest through structural elements that organize the interaction for maximum understanding, empowerment, and connection among participants" (p. 27).

Impromptu conferences. The final example of informal RJ practices was impromptu conferences. Morris (1998) alluded conflicts usually occur when a combination of anxiety, frustration, and fear boils over. It is hypothesized by Smith et al. (2015) that teachers can reduce conflict by creating conditions that prevent such feeling from occurring. Smith et al. (2015) advanced the thought by saying anxiety, frustration, and fear can never be completely eliminated, so students need strategies for resolving simple conflicts before they explode into

complex and major incidents. Morris (1988) agreed and added teachers working as facilitators can implement impromptu conferences to assist students in resolving situations that may threaten their relationships and disrupt their learning. Smith et al. (2015) highlighted impromptu conferences as a way to resolve conflicts quickly before they get any bigger. They documented components that are essential to successful impromptu conferences as being brief, not being threatened with punishment, student's voice heard, teacher shares their feelings, teacher reminds students that they are accountable to others, teacher suggests students resolve the problem, and a teacher models how to communicate in a disagreement (Smith et al. 2015). Rather than impose judgment, Smith et al. (2015) submitted it is beneficial for teachers to give students a chance to resolve their issues with the teacher's help.

Writing prompts can also be used in the impromptu conferences. Writing can be beneficial for students whole emotions are running high as highlighted by Smith et al. (2015). Research by Jack Canfield's (1986) *Total Truth Process* provided sentence starters to help students in conflict prepare for conversations. Canfield's (1986) process allowed students to start by expressing their anger and then move through a series of emotions ending up with compassion and forgiveness. As Canfield (1986) rationalized the reason he called it total truth was many times when people become upset, we do not communicate effectively to the person we are upset with. Canfield (1986) furthered, people tend to get stuck in their hurt or anger and struggle to get past it and work through it, which makes it difficult to achieve closure after such an emotionally draining confrontation. In order for the process to be successful, Canfield (1986) insisted that students should spend time expressing their feelings at each of the stages. Below

are a few sentences starters developed by Smith et al. (2015) that helped students express their feelings;

- Anger and resentment-I am angry that…, I resent…
- Hurt-I was hurt when…, I was disappointed when…
- Fear-I felt afraid when…, I was scared of you when…
- Remorse, regret, and accountability-Please accept my apology for…, I am sorry for…
- Want- What I needed from you…, I deserve…
- Love, compassion, forgiveness, and appreciation-I like it when…, I appreciate it when...

As pointed out by Smith et al. (2015) students are oftentimes not aware of their thoughts before they start writing. It is with the sentence starters that lead students on a path towards accountability of the situation (Smith et al. 2015).

The IIRP (2018) summarized and suggested using impromptu conferences in the following ways: a strategy that quickly resolves lower-level incidents involving two or more people, both the wrongdoer and those harmed are asked to answer a series of RJ questions in front of each other, a model of a healthy approach to conflict resolution and breaks the pattern of lower-level incidents that increase or carry over time, encouragement for people involved in the incident to talk to each other, express their feelings, and think about the impact of their behavior, taking place as soon as an incident occurs, and conducted in a respectful tone with the adult acting as a facilitator and not a disciplinarian. When used effectively, impromptu conferences can de-escalate and resolve a minor situation and decrease the likelihood of the situation resurfacing and becoming more problematic (Smith et al. 2015).

Formal Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) Practices

Evans & Vaandering (2016) stressed nurturing healthy relationships was an essential component of RJ practices in education. When healthy relationships are paired with just and equitable learning environments, the classroom or setting is empowered to handle situations in which students that are in conflict or cause each other significant harm (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). Smith et al. (2015) confirmed by saying "when wrongs occur, we demand justice-buts it's how we define justice that matters" (p. 107). Evans & Vaandering (2016) defined harm as "more than a physical or emotional injury. It is anything that undermines a person's dignity or minimizes their worth. Harm doesn't have to be intentional. We might cause harm with what we deem to be innocent comments or actions" (p. 80). In addition to harm, Evans & Vaandering (2016) defined conflict as "two people disagreeing" (p. 81). When people engage in conflict, a relationship is acknowledged. Evans & Vaandering (2016) documented when a conflict emerges in a relationship there are potential effects on the relationship.

IIRP (2018) defined crime and conflict as a "violation of people and relationships" rather than a violation of laws or rules (IIRP 2018). Restorative justice in education (RJE) sought to ask a different set of questions. Rather than who broke a rule and what punishments does the person deserve, the IIRP (2018) developed and Smith et al. also cited a set of questions for a facilitator to use during formal restorative practices:

- How did you feel?
- What questions did you want to ask the offender?
- What else did you want to say to him or her?
- Who or what could make things right for you?

- What would justice have looked like for you?

In schools and classroom, harms that are not clearly identified in the discipline codes are often overlooked (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). Smith et al. (2015), pointed out RJ practices is an educational approach, utilizing resources to ensure students continue to learn. Citing Carol Gilligan, Howard Zehr (2002) noted that those who are considered "offenders" are often those who have experienced injustice. Zehr (2002) continued and expanded by writing the offender's behaviors can be seen as an attempt to correct an injustice. A student's behavior may not change permanently change after a single restorative conference, however, permanent change does not occur after suspension of explosion (Smith et al. 2015). According to Kay Pranis (2005), justice is not about getting even, but rather about getting well.

As connected people when we are wronged we want and even demand justice. Smith et al. (2015) urged the importance of how we define and handle justice. Noted further, traditional discipline efforts focus on determining guilt and punishing the offender. RJ practitioners such as Smith et al. (2015), Zehr (2002), Evans & Vaandering(2016) and others believed RJ practices take a more educative approach, utilizing resources to ensure that students continue to learn. The first step, according to Smith et al. (2015) is in ensuring students continue to learn when a significant harm has occurred is to make peace. The IIRP (2018) provided a restorative plan for offending students that required offenders to acknowledge their behavior, apologies, express remorse, commit to do better the next time, and offer to repair or pay restitution. These requirements are vastly different from the types of consequence normally found in school (Smith et al. 2015). Curwin & Mendler (2007) suggested the restorative plan has the potential to permanently change students' future behaviors by developing their internal control mechanisms

and empathy toward others. As Braithwaite (1989 as cited in Smith et al. 2015) noted, offenders who cannot restore the relationships they've damaged will often develop new relationships with fellow offenders who are similarly isolated. These new relationships can evolve into a subculture of wrongdoers who see no need to comply with the rules, much less develop positive habits and relationships with people who do. Thus the significance of restorative practices to improve school climate and culture (Smith et al. 2015). This belief is supported by others such as Dweck (2006), Ricci (2017), Zehr (2002) and more.

Types of formal RJ practices. Formal RJ practices are implemented to address significant problems/behaviors that are unlikely to be resolved without an investment in time and conversation (Smith et al. 2015). Mullet (2014) argued that conversations in these types of scenarios must be respectful and allow perspectives of everyone to be heard before any further action is taken. She recommended that educators follow a three-phase process to help students repair relationships, address the harm they've caused, and support one another as they reflect on the process and develop habits of their own. Mullet's (2014) process is as follows:

- Phase 1: Unwind. Those that have been harmed have a chance to speak their feelings in private. They are encouraged to "unwind" or calm down from the hurt they experienced. This conversation focuses on re-establishing the victim's identity. The phase also focuses on hearing ideas from the victim on was to allow for restitution, repair, and healing.
- Phase 2: Rewind. This phase provides the offender the chance to reflect on their behavior and understand the harm that it caused. The phase reviews the situation, consider the facts, and identify an action plan to make things right. The goal of this

phase is to elicit empathy in students and ensure that they accept responsibility for their actions.

- Phase 3: Windup. The observers of the conflict/situation have the chance to share their thoughts and become participants in the healing process, supporting both the victim and the offender. This phase is empowering and increases the likelihood that relationships will be repaired and positive behavior continues. (p.160-161)

Mullet's (2014) three phases for addressing serious conflict can be implemented using a variety of formal restorative processes. When offending students understand the harm they have caused, they do less of it (Mullet, 2014). Smith et al. (2015) pointed out that formal restorative practices take time to implement. Listening to students who have been harmed and to those that caused the harm can take up hours of the school day. As Mullet (2014) noted, "Restorative minded educators view getting well as an academic priority and make time during the day for restorative dialogue" (p. 161). Smith et al. (2015) recommended implementing formal classroom circles for resolving conflicts within the class, victim-offender conversation for resolving conflicts, allowing victim to meet with offender(s) and allowing offender(s) to show remorse and make amends and in high-stakes conferences for addressing serious conflicts that involve larger groups, such as the victim's and the offender's families and can include law enforcement if necessary.

Formal classroom circles. Mullet's (2014) Windup phase is used during a formal classroom circle. Formal classroom circles have the ability to address a variety of concerns ranging from recess issues to cheating (Smith et al. 2015). Trained facilitators run formal circles because of the strong emotions and reactions by students and teachers (Zehr, 2002). When

trained facilitators lead formal classroom circles, teachers are free to express their feeling and listen carefully to their students (Pranis, 2005). Students might see when teachers lead formal circles as self-serving, bias and may result in a lack of participation or buy-in (Smith, et. al., 2015). Smith et al. (2015) continued by stressing this kind of approach fails to move the students thinking from of their own interest to considering the overall welfare of the group. Zehr (2002), Smith et al. (2015), Costello et al. (2009), recommended four norms when using formal circles:

- one voice-one person speaks at a time
- listen with mind and heart-actively listen to what others are saying
- safe place-maintain confidentiality
- make space-be respectful to others, listen and speak when appropriate

It is a good idea for circle rules to be posted for the facilitator to use when starting the circle or in case the circle breaks down (Smith et al. 2015).

Witness circles is a variation of a fishbowl circle which addresses a larger conflict while the outer circle observers. However, in the witness circle, the smaller circles includes an open chair reserved from anyone from the observing circles who has something to say over the course of the discussion (Smith et al. 2015). The purpose as stated by Smith et al. (2015) is not to come up with a solution to a problem, but, rather, to show students that the problem affects more than just the students who are immediately involved. Witness circles help to make students feel more accountable to their peers and recognize their responsibility as witnesses to harmful behavior (Smith et al. 2015).

High stakes or family group conferences. High stakes or family group conferences are designed to recognize and deal with serious issues that could include family members, law enforcement, or other outside parties (Smith et al. 2015). The IIRP (2018) wrote high stakes conferences brings together family support networks—parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbors, and close family friends—to make important decisions that might otherwise be made by professionals. Young people, who are usually the focus of these conferences, need the sense of community, identity, and stability that only the family, in its various forms, can provide. Families are more likely than professionals to find solutions that actively involve other family members, thus keeping the child within the care of the family, rather than transferring care of the child to the government. Also, when families are empowered to fix their own problems, the very process of empowerment facilitates healing (Rush, 2006 as cited in IIRP, 2018). Often, young offenders do not realize that their actions have significant repercussions besides the others directly involved because they do not recognize the investment others have made in their social and emotional development (Smith et al. 2015). High-stakes conferences require a significant amount of time in advance to make sure that all the right people are in attendance and are properly prepared (Smith et al. 2015).

There are two models of high-stakes or family group conferences that are widely used (Zehr, 2002). One model that has been used considerably in the United States was initially developed by police in Australia, based on ideas from New Zealand. This approach has a standardized scripted model of facilitation. The facilitators may be authority figures such as specially trained police officers. This approach provides special attention to the dynamics of shame and actively works to use shame in a positive way (Zehr, 2002).

The second model of family group conferences originated in New Zealand and today provided the standard for juvenile justice in New Zealand (Zehr, 2002). This model is known as the Victim Offenders Conferences (VOCs) or circles (Zehr, 2002). Victim-offender dialogue is best when addressing conflicts among small groups of students rather than whole class issues (Smith et al. 2015). Restorativejustice.org (n.d.) provided attributes of facilitators as follows:

- empathy
- emotional intelligence
- interpersonal skills (especially active listening, negotiating, problem-solving, and communicating both verbally and nonverbally)
- cognitive skills (especially paying attention, auditory processing, and reasoning)

When emotions are high it is not the best time to convene a victim-offender dialogue (Smith et al. 2015). Mullet (2014), stressed the importance of the unwind phase first. Restorativejustice.org (n.d.) shared Mullet's viewed and continued to stress the importance of meeting with the students involved in advance to evaluate their motivations and gather facts about the situation. Costello et al. (2009) developed a set of questions during the first initial conversations. The facilitator can ask the offender the following set of questions:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way have they been affected?
- What do you think you might need to do to make things right?

and might ask the victim the following questions:

- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- What effect has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

If neither the victim or the offender participates in the dialogue, or it can't take place, Smith et al. (2015) suggested other consequences may need to be applied. The dialogue beings with the facilitator stating the purpose of the meeting, providing an overview of what happened, and the necessary steps to repair the harm is done (Smith et al. 2015). The facilitator asks the participants to actively listen, acknowledge the feelings and encourage each other to share their thoughts and perspectives (IIRP, 2018). Mullet (2014) noted, "recognize their obligations and commit to restore, reconcile, make restitution, which is real consequences of their actions" (p. 161). Many times, students are harder on themselves that the adults would have been, so the facilitator has to be attentive and respond appropriately to the offers on how to restore relationship and repair harm (Smith et al. 2015). IIRP (2018) shared the dialogue should be recorded and shared with teachers, counselors, and administrators. Smith et al. (2015) estimated that about half of all victim-offender dialogues require a follow-up meeting. Zehr (2002) concluded by noting,

> not all restorative approaches involve a direct encounter, and not all needs can be met through an encounter. While victims have some needs that involve the offender, they also have needs that do not. Similarly, offenders have needs and obligations that have nothing to do with the victim. (p. 52)

Rationale

"When we rely on rules rather than relationships when harms' been done, we all lose" (Amstutz & Mullet, p.42). The main focus of the literature review was to determine what types of RJ practices interventions can be useful for a behavioral interventionist in an elementary school. The historical overview of RJ was pertinent to understand how current practices, processes, and interventions were developed. It provided an insight into the foundation of recent practices and showed how education has adapted and modified the framework of RJ. Based on the research the most successful interventions and practical applications for a school setting as identified as the following; class meetings, impromptu conferences, informal circles (fishbowls, inside-outside, class circles), and formal circles (class circles, victim and offender circles).

Concluding Thoughts

Developing and maintaining positive relationships was stressed as an important goal throughout the literature review, starting with Indigenous people. Further research adapted this concept to the criminal justice system and then into the education setting. The research proved RJ practices can be used as interventions in creating a better class and school climate and culture. The research of the informal and formal practices framework emphasized the importance of implementing those strategies consistently, continuously and following the process throughout the school year. Consistency is paramount to be successful in modifying behavior. The importance of positive feedback and positive student-teacher relationships has clearly been proven and teachers need to take the research approach seriously to able to use the strategies consistently.

Surprisingly, a lot of teachers believe that they have good relationships with their students, even though they are struggling with inappropriate behavior on a daily basis. That means, even with the best instructional strategies, behavior management remains a major issue for teachers. In Chapter Three, a Google site will accessible to provide more information on the foundation of RJE, principles that guide RJE, informal intervention ideas and lessons (circles, affective statements, and impromptu conferences), podcasts, ted talks, testimonials, video links, and additional resources. The site will be for a behavioral interventionist at an elementary school initially and then shared out to colleagues digitally after modeling and mentoring.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Project Purpose

Having grown up around educators and then becoming one myself, my passion and purpose is to and has been to impact families through their educational experience. My teaching experience has largely been in an affluent suburb of a major metropolitan city in the upper Midwest. The school I worked at was a high percentage of white students from a middle to an upper-class family. Our proficiency scores on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments ranged from 75-85% proficient. There were very little behavior concerns. As the demographics in our building changed, our school saw a rise in behavioral concerns or issues. Through professional development and my role as the Equity and Cultural Lead Teacher, my interest in RJ practices grew. I found myself providing interventions to teachers on how to connect with students. After some research, I found a lot of my strategies or ways of approaching problematic behavior or developing relationships was grounded in restorative practices. I wanted to do more and work in a different environment that encouraged the use of restorative practices. During the summer of 2016, a good friend of mine reached out and suggested a job opportunity that aligned with my passion. After interviewing, I knew I needed to make the change, so I did. At the start of the 2016-2017 school year, I started at an all-black charter school in an inner-city metropolitan area in the Midwest. The school's professional development focus was on RJ practices and trauma-informed practices. This was my first surface level exposure to RJ practices. The charter

school was only open for one school year. Even with the school closing under unfortunate circumstances, my passion remained and actually deepened. It was in the closing of the school that I realized I needed to continue my education and professional development on mentoring and providing teachers and students more effective ways to achieve appropriate behaviors that are not dependent upon handing out punishments or consequences. I also realized I wanted to mentor and support other educators in the classroom management system and their day to day interactions with their class. With that interest, I am now transitioned to a new role, in a magnet school in a suburb of a major metropolitan area in the Midwest. My role as a behavior interventionist is to support, and mentor teachers by providing, documenting and evaluating behavioral interventions, and assisting in professional development surrounding the climate and culture of the school.

The literature review for this capstone project has laid the foundation to determine how to use RJ interventions to increase overall relationships in schools. It answered the research question: *What RJE interventions can be used to support teachers in creating a better climate and culture in their classrooms?* This chapter addresses the need for a professional site (*RJE Interventions*) available for all staff at an elementary level. The site (*RJE Interventions*) will be developed over a three-phase process.

Chapter Two Overview

Chapter Two provided an extensive literature review on the history and definition of RJ practices, the importance of a growth mindset on effective classroom management, and successful informal and formal RJ practice interventions to decrease unwanted behavior and increase connectedness.

Howard Zehr (2002), a leader in RJ, defined RJ as "a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense, and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible" (p. 20). Building a positive climate and culture within our schools and classroom has become increasingly difficult over the past decade. In my experience with teachers and different types of schools, schools are faced with school shootings, violence between teachers and students, student to student harm, and a need to change their teaching styles and mindsets to reach all learners, all while being culturally responsive. Examples from my experiences with teachers reveal a teacher's mindset is an essential component in their classroom management. RJ practices are built on creating and maintaining healthy and positive relationships (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). In order for restorative practices to be effective, teachers must be open and have a growth mindset (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). The willingness and growth mindset is particularly important in effective classroom management (Smith et al. 2015). In my 14 years in the teaching field, I have heard several definitions of classroom management that are confusing and misleading. RJE practitioners, such a Smith et al. (2015) supported the Cassetta & Sawyer (2013) definition of classrooms as being "about building relationships with students and teaching social skills along with academic skills" (p.16). Smith et al. (2015) proposed two aspects of an effective learning environment: "relationships (specifically the range of interpersonal skills necessary to maintain healthy relationships) and high-quality education" (2015, p. 2) They believe when students have strong, trusting relationships with the adults and peers in their school, and when their instruction and lessons are interesting relevant, it is harder for them to misbehave.

Schools that are more invested in peacemaking and peacebuilding than peacekeeping seek to transform their efforts by making them part of the explicit, rather than hidden, curriculum (Bickmore, 2011 Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Empowerment is at the center of restorative practices (Smith et al. 2015, p. 85). RJ practices are categorized into two groups; informal and formal. Informal practices include affective statements that communicate people's feelings, as well as affective questions that cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. Impromptu restorative conferences, groups, and circles are somewhat more structured but do not require the elaborate preparation needed for formal conferences (IIRP, 2018). As RJ practices become more formal, they involve more people, require more planning and time, and are more structured and complete.

Rationale

Before arriving at the decision to create a Google site, I originally planned on creating a professional resource guide. However, after considerable thought and discussion with others, I needed to make my project easily accessible, convenient, and comprehensive through the mode of technology. Thus, I shifted the project to a Google site to ensure overall usability. The Google site I created contains research, strategies, additional resources that have been and will continue to be updated regularly. It also has the potential to be shared among Google users. This is and will continue to be an ongoing project.

RJE Interventions Google Site

My google site, *https://google.com/view/**rje-interventions*** was created to be engaging and useful for other teachers. In addition to being a valuable and efficient resource, I also wanted teachers to be able to effectively access and use the materials found on the *RJE interventions*

site. I used Google Assistant to aid in developing the Google site since I had never created a site before. In addition to Google Assistant, I found specific information about the site/website design guideline policies through the website, United States Department of Health and Human Services (2006) which included a helpful guideline. The guideline suggested creating a site that is engaging, relevant, and appropriate to the audience (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). This guide was the foundation of which I decided to build my *RJE interventions* site around to ensure engagement, relevant, and appropriate for my audience of K-5 teachers, support staff and administrators. The *RJE interventions* site was developed to change the culture of how teachers manage their classroom. Restorative practices are the main component of the professional guide.

Website contents. There are many components to the *RJE interventions* site. The name of the site is *RJE Interventions*. The *RJE interventions* site was created through the guidance of Google Assistant and Google tutorials. *RJE Interventions* site contains resources for behavioral interventionists, classroom teachers, specialists teachers, support staff and administration. To create an effective Google site, current literature was reviewed for three different topics: a history of restorative justice, the importance of mindset of teacher and school on students, and informal and formal restorative practices in schools. The resources added and summarized scholarly articles, some of which have been cited in this paper, that help educators understand the history, process, and application of RJ practice interventions. The Google site (*RJE Interventions*) is more than research. The biggest draw to the site is the explicit content that teachers or staff can immediately implement or watch to gain more knowledge. The Google site focus is on informal RJE interventions such as circles, affective and identity statements, and

impromptu conferences. Users will be able to immediately use lesson plans, watch videos, listen to podcasts or ted talks. In addition, reviewers will find a reference page to further their interest in RJE practices.

The Google site (*RJE Interventions*) is a convenient way for other teachers and support staff to read through research without taking too much time out of their busy schedules and to become more knowledgeable. In addition, this Google site (*RJE Interventions*) condenses significant amounts of research, activities, ideas, lessons, application, podcasts, ted talks, and more into one central location. Thus, eliminating the endless searching for ideas, strategies, research, examples, and application of restorative practice interventions.

On the Google site (*RJE Interventions*), I created five tabs; home, informal RJE interventions, videos, testimonials, and more. The first tab, home, has a drop down for a sub-page, about RJ/RJE. The sub-page contains summarized research from scholarly articles about the history, process, and application for restorative justice practice interventions. The second tab is informal RJE interventions. This tab provides backround information and lesson plans for circles, affective and identity statements, and impromptu conferences. The third page is videos. All of the videos were found on youtube. The video discusses and shows the history of RJ practices and application of RJE circles. The videos provide a point of reference for teachers to model from. Testimonials are the fourth tab. The site (*RJE Interventions*) will have testimonials from students, teacher, and administrators on the RJE circle process. This tab is the heart of the site. Whoever reads the testimonials will leave wanting to try Circles in their classroom because of the overwhelming positive change and the powerful voices of the students. In the future, I would like to add a comments section. I want to add this tab to gauge what my

audience wants more of, their personal stories, and how to grow and improve my Google site (*RJE Interventions*). The last tab is the more. This sub-page has a drop-down menu of mindset practices and strategies. This sub-page will discuss the importance of having a growth mindset. The page will also include some ideas on how to change your mindset, prepare for difficult conversations (in a Circle), and more. In addition, the more tab has podcasts and ted talks covering the topic of what is RJE, why to use RJE in schools, and more. The final sub-page contains the references. This page will guide the viewer to more information if they choose.

Setting/Audience

The targeted audience of my Google site (*RJE Interventions*) is classroom teachers, specialist teachers, support staff, administration and others in an educational setting. The site contains research, lesson plans, videos, podcasts, testimonials, and more that primarily focuses on creating a stronger climate and culture in our schools through restorative justice practices. Anyone in the school system can use the information, research, tools, and strategies to create stronger relationships thus decreasing negative behavior. Classroom teachers can use this site to build a strong sense of community in their classroom while addressing a range of topics, scenarios, and situations. The site is only available to those I share it with. I intend to share it with everyone within my building. I initially plan on introducing the site via a staff meeting or in a PLC (professional learning community) for teachers to ask questions, get assistance accessing, and more.

Project Description

In my position as a behavioral interventionist, I will be supporting, mentoring and modeling behavioral interventions for all staff. I envision myself being in the classrooms prior to

teachers requesting intervention. In order to be effective and obtain teacher buy-in, I need to have a pre-meeting or pre-referral checklist of what to ask, how to ask, and how to non-verbally and verbally demonstrate support and understanding. It will be extremely important to be seen as supportive and not authoritarian**.**

The project will be built in three step phase. After each phase, a reflection summary will be completed.

Month one. Research on how to create a Google site (*RJE Interventions*). After creating and reflecting, the site will then be shared with the entire staff at the magnet school. The site, which will have five tabs (with drop-down menus) of RJE informal interventions with a history of RJE, RJE Circle foundation, power and obstacles of Circles, how Circles work, Circle elements, and Circle topics with complete lesson plans. In addition, the other included tabs are videos, testimonials, and more (mindset practices and strategies, podcasts, ted talks, and references). I will have a "get your mind right" tip sheet for myself prior to presenting with the teacher needing interventions and preparing for difficult but necessary Circles, which will not be included on the site. This form will provide me with creating a climate that is connected and collaborative which will allow me to affirm, validate, build and bridge the staff knowledge of restorative practices. The first month will be spent creating three (Circles, affective statements, and impromptu conferences) informal RJE interventions that can be used school-wide. The interventions will have a form detailing the rationale of an intervention, what was previously done, and background information. An additional form will be created for classroom observations that will take into account the intervention previously completed by the referring teacher.

Month two. The second phase of the project is reserved for the implementation of informal RJE practices. Informal RJE practices must come after the initial school-wide behavior process has been taught and the classroom structure is in place. During this time period, there will be significant observing inside the classrooms, facilitating and modeling circles for teachers and providing feedback for teachers using informal restorative practices. I also will be developing a Google survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the informal RJE practice interventions.

Month three. The final month will solely be on revision, editing, and streamlining resources into one location. This month will have additions to the site for staff. Hyperlinks, video simulations, further resources will be placed into the appropriate folder. Video simulations from the internet search and other environments will be uploaded and placed into the site. The videos will include informal RJE practice interventions. The final piece to the intervention process is reflection. I developed and will complete a self-reflection survey on how the process is working, staff feedback, and effectiveness on the school as a whole. The majority of this information will be in collaboration with the building administration.

Timeline

An implementation plan for a three month period is put into place at the beginning of the year to best serve the students and staff for the 2018-2019 school year.

Assessment

The site (*RJE Interventions*) will be assessed by any user that chooses to complete the Google survey form (found under the more tab directly on the site). The Google form asks the user 5 questions using a linear scale assessment on either a one to five(one-strongly disagree to

strongly agree) or a yes/no, and short answers. My direct supervisors will be asked to complete the form during my practice run before presenting the site to the entire staff.

Summary

A positive school climate is paramount to student success. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2010) theorized "schools and societies have come to the conclusion that if those who misbehave or commit crimes are made to suffer with a punishment, they will be less likely to repeat the harmful behavior" (p. 62). Furthermore, Evans and Vaandering (2016) add restorative practices create an environment that requires engagement, shared caring and empowerment that nurtures, feeds, guides, and supports. My Google site (*RJE Interventions*) will start the process of creating such environments.

Chapter four reflects on different aspects of the professional resource guide, such as my personal growth as a reviewer, writer, learner, and interventionist. In addition, the literature review is revisited and important points stressed in connection with the professional resource guide. The future implementation of the guide along with its limitations will also be addressed in order to be an effective and successful resource to improve relationships between school members.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Project Benefits

This project has been beneficial to my role as a behavioral interventionist in a variety of ways. This project has provided me with several new strategies to improve teacher-student relationships, improve student behavior, and restore and repair relationships in the school community while providing me with research to support my research question. The literature I reviewed will continue to support my work as a behavior interventionist and provide me with ways to implement my new found knowledge into professional development and increase overall school climate and connectedness.

My research question was: *What RJE interventions can be used to support teachers in creating better climate and culture in their classrooms?*

My project contributed to my research question in diverse ways. The Google site I created contains research that I had summarized to explain how to create a strong climate and culture teacher-student environment using RJE practices as interventions. The Google site also contains easily accessible and convenient strategies for a teacher to read quickly, or skim, in order to add ways to create a stronger climate and culture within their classrooms along with ways to improve, repair and restore relationships. In addition to strategies, additional resources are also available on the Google site. The site had links to podcasts on RJE practices covering a range of topics. Along with the podcast links, the site also provides viewers with hyperlinks to

ted talks and videos from youtube of RJE practices as interventions being used in various settings. The categories and subcategories are listed efficiently and are easy to view/listen to quickly. Professionals in the teaching field who visit the Google site will take away new strategies and new knowledge to improve their relationships and overall climate and culture within their classrooms and schools. In addition, the Google site has benefited my research question by providing me with more research to help other teachers and myself understand strategies to use. In addition, the site has afforded me a way to share research and reach more teachers, students, administration, and others in the education field. This Google site has the potential to be accessed globally which can provide a substantial impact to the education field in creating more restorative and stronger climate and culture school communities.

Learnings

My skill set as a researcher, writer, learner, and educator has drastically improved throughout the capstone process. As a researcher and learner, I have gained more knowledge about practices and strategies that create a strong climate and culture by increasing positive and appropriate behaviors in school. The research I reviewed, studied and read about provided me with the rationale behind the research and the need for it, thus benefiting me as a researcher and writer. This process required significant writing. I drafted, wrote, edited, and re-wrote throughout this process. There were times during this process that I had to reach out to the writing center, friends, colleagues to assist me in the writing process. The amount and type of writing forced me to learn how to differentiate my writing and incorporate different styles into my professional writing, such as APA style. The biggest area of my personal growth both expected and unexpected during this capstone process has been the number of strategies, tools,

and change in mindset needed to use to increase teacher-student relationships to lead to more positive behavior outcomes and hence decreasing the negative behaviors.

Some of the learnings I had throughout this process were unexpected. I currently am employed at a magnet elementary school with a focus on leadership, engineering, and design as a behavior interventionist. As I work with my social skills groups, present to staff, support staff, and interact with students I find myself using language and practices from my research. I have subconsciously added restorative justice language to how I speak, the words I use, and how I approach atypically situations. These changes were unexpected. I realized that I should be incorporating some samples on how to speak to children, what words to use, and how to approach the atypical situations. Previously, I assumed these were "common sense" practices. However, after speaking with several of my peers, I realized they were NOT common sense. I concluded I needed to explicitly teach my peers how to speak to children, what words to use and when, and how to approach atypical situations. This was unexpected. I did not have a good grasp on their level of understanding children, behavior, trauma, conflict-resolution, and class management. I assumed my peers knew more than what they did.

Connections to the Literature Review

There was valuable information from the literature review that helped me create my Google site. A lot of the research I found encouraged me to share about strategies with other education staff. Specifically, the research done by Smith et al. (2015) and Boyes-Watson & Pranis (2015) assisted in adding information to my Google site (*RJE Interventions*). Smith et al. (2015) provided the historical framework, knowledge base, examples and summaries of informal and formal RJE practices as interventions. The information from Smith et al. (2015) was used

as a section of the Google site (*RJE Interventions*) to provide a basic overview of restorative justice practices. Boyes-Watson & Pranis (2015) equipped my Google site (*RJE Interventions*) with examples and scripts of restorative circles for educational professionals to use in the classroom. Which, I then used to create a section on the site for additional resources for teachers and ready to use circle lesson plans.

Throughout the process of creating the Google site (*RJE Interventions*) and writing this paper, I have found more research to add to my Google site (*RJE Interventions*). I have also found relevant strategies and tools I want to include in my Google site (*RJE Interventions*) in the future; changing mindsets teachers use in the classroom and how this is beneficial to both student and teacher growth (Circle process, lesson plans, examples of affective statements/questions and impromptu conferences, testimonials, podcast, and ted talks) and videos modeling how to gauge a difficult situation in a Circle (how to follow the process, initiating the Circle process, much language to use, how to adjust the environment, how to use space, and more.). These are current strategies I am implementing in my own practice as a behavior interventionists and I hope to share this information with other teachers via my Google site (*RJE Interventions*).

I added a definition from Howard Zehr (2002) that described what RJE schools and it's necessary importance. With school-wide behavioral expectations and classroom management systems varying greatly across schools, communities, RJE practices as interventions provide a different way of viewing and handling unexpected and or unwanted negative school behavior (Smith et al. 2015). I placed Zehr's (2002) definition of restorative justice in the first section in order to assist people to understand what the Google site is about immediately.

Possible District-Wide Behavior Process Implications

Potential policy implications are highly likely with this project. As a Google site, this project has the potential to be shared with an unlimited number of people, in my current school district, state-wide, nationally, and internationally. Many countries already use RJ practices as a part of their judicial process. Other countries use RJE practices in schools to discuss academics, trauma, expectations, and more. The Google site does have the potential to inform and show our decision makers a different and more effective way of handling and changing the way we as schools approach negative school behaviors. The audience of *RJE Interventions* is primarily for K-5 teachers; ELL (English language learners teachers), classroom teachers, specialist teachers (music, art, media, and physical education), administration and any support staff that works with students. However, because this project is a Google site, it can be used any anyone as a resource if I make it public. For example, school board members could learn from this Google site. Which is extremely crucial because of they influential part they have in making important decisions for our schools. They can become more informed of the reality of what teachers and students face in the classroom in regards to behavior, and this could help them make decisions with the best interests for teachers, school staff and students in mind.

Limitations

There were a couple of limitations that occurred while creating this project. First, I am not formally trained to be Restorative Justice circle facilitator. Although I researched extensively and had limited prior exposure to RJE practices, I am not trained nor certified. Secondly, with a large number of languages spoken, religions practiced, and cultures in my school community the need to be culturally proficient and aware is necessary. This is a

limitation because many of our school staff is white, middle-class, and female that teaches and understand situations only through the lens they were raised in. In order to use RJ practices as interventions successfully, our teaching staff have to understand where our students are coming from, what their norms are, how to speak to them, and what are the culturally expected norms.

In the future, I will add more research to my Google site (*RJE Interventions*). This is an ongoing project that I plan to continue adding information to. I plan to produce new and relevant research and continue increasing the number of strategies and tips for teachers to use to my Google site (*RJE Interventions*). I will create more tabs and add sub-tabs where appropriate to add in the new research and strategies. I would like to add a tab in the future on how to use circles for academics. There are several research articles that support circles being used as academic tools and strategies. This project could move forward in many ways and teach educators how to best teach and connect with students through RJE practices as interventions for behavior and academics.

Another way this research can be expanded is through other social media outlets. The project has only focused on delivering information via a Google site (*RJE Interventions*). In the future, I would like to expand this project to Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. By using other social media outlets, the variety of people regardless of age, profession, language spoken are provided with information and examples of what and how RJE practices in school settings work.

Communicating Results

I will share my Google site (*RJE Interventions*) with the entire licensed staff at my elementary staff. After receiving feedback from my peers, I will have to make necessary adjustments and continuously re-publish the site (*RJE Interventions*) so it can be viewed by

anyone via Google. I will also then share it at our "wrap around" meetings. Wrap around meetings are held once every trimester. Each school site has a wrap around that includes all the major players in the school district (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Curricula, Director of Special Education, principal, assistant principal, teacher leads, and more. At the wrap around meeting, I can work through the site with my audience while showing videos of the interventions our school has implemented and how it has changed our school climate and culture for the positive. If the feedback is positive I hope to spread the site to other buildings with training and support.

Benefits to the Teaching Profession

This Google site (*RJE Interventions*) has the capability to change the way we look at, deal with and understand "negative" behaviors. The Google site (*RJE Interventions*) created benefits the teaching profession by providing educators with an understanding of RJE history, strategies, lesson plans, podcast, ted-talks, and video simulations. Creating and maintaining of positive climate and culture full of connections is necessary before academic instruction can begin. Students need to feel welcome, valued and heard in their classrooms. This project guides teachers understanding of the importance of RJE practices as interventions in a step by step or scenario by scenario model through the use of videos, podcast, testimonials, and specific lesson plans. The impact of this site (*RJE Interventions*) is beyond the education field. The site (*RJE Interventions*) benefits are limitless. This site (*RJE Interventions*) benefits the teaching profession along with so many others, psychology, criminal justice, interactions between family members, and conflict-resolution just to name a few.

The Google site, *RJE Interventions* is a product of my philosophy that was supported by the research of many. RJE aligns with my belief system of teaching students what we expect and providing explicit instruction of a skill set that they are missing rather than handing down punishments. The site (*RJE Interventions*) provided me with an outlet and an option for others to view and manage behavior differently. My prior knowledge was built upon as I learned more specific ways to implement RJE practices as interventions in everyday classroom interactions. Although there were some limitations, this site is an ongoing project that will continuously be updated and modified. This site's (*RJE Interventions*) potential is limitless. As Casas (2017) said, "our spoken words and the positive was we conduct ourselves can the catalyst that can spark change and culturize a school community that yields success for all students" (p. 105). My Google site (*RJE Interventions*) will provide our school system with tools to increase our positive spoken and unspoken words to effect change.

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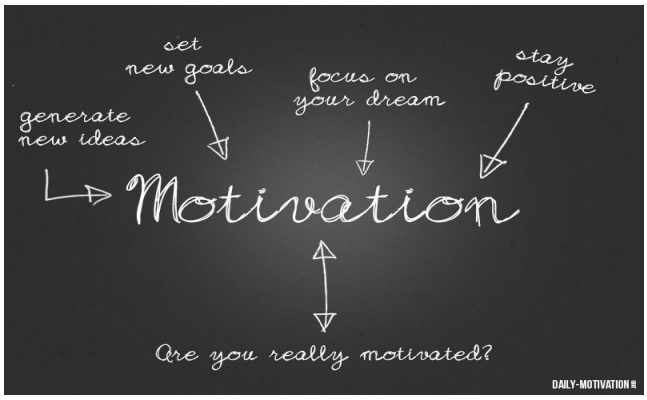
APPENDIX

GET YOUR MIND RIGHT



Erin:
You got this. Remember the following when you present or encounter difficult conversations.

1. Before speaking or meeting with someone tell yourself.
   YOU GOT THIS!!!
2. Speak with confidence

3. Be yourself. Don't be afraid to show people who you are.

4. Remember the importance of active listening.
   a. do not be quick to assume you know what people are saying
   b. repeat to check your understanding
   c. keep things confidential if necessary

5. Build trust.
   a. make sure to follow up on the things you said you going to do
   b. remember the golden rule: treat others the way you want to be treated