

Restorative Justice in Multnomah County Schools

Program Evaluation: Part 1

A Report to Resolutions Northwest

September 2012

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I. Background

Resolutions Northwest, a Portland area nonprofit organization, contracted with the PSU Center for Student Success in the Graduate School of Education to conduct a program evaluation of the effectiveness of their Restorative Justice program currently being implemented in some Multnomah County schools. The evaluation was conducted in five of the eight schools currently participating in the Restorative Justice project. Included in this study were the following schools: one elementary school (Rigler School, grades K-8), two middle schools (Parkrose Middle School, grades 6-8 and Floyd Light Middle School grades 6-8), and two high schools (Grant High School, grades 9-12 and David Douglas High School, grades 9-12). These five schools are located in the Portland, Parkrose, and David Douglas public school districts in the Portland metropolitan area. At the time decisions were made related to the schools for further study considerations included: availability, access, current level of implementation, and budgetary constraints.

The plan for this evaluation is tentatively scheduled over a two-year period, with the first component of the study occurring from November 2011 to August 2012. The primary data collection instrument used for this first component is a set of collaboratively designed focus group protocols targeted toward students, teachers, and administrators in each of the participating schools. Center staff worked directly with Restorative Justice staff to develop and organize all aspects of the evaluation plan.

The Restorative Justice alternative discipline model is currently being implemented in targeted schools with two intended outcomes: 1) reducing the number of student exclusions and 2) decreasing incidents of police and juvenile justice involvement. The RJ model combines philosophy, practice, and principles designed to increase school safety, decrease school dropouts, and ultimately improve graduation rates. Key principles of the Restorative Justice model include an emphasis on healing over punishment, inclusion over exclusion, and individual accountability – all of these combined with a high level of community support.

Key to the model's success is a commitment to involving all stakeholders to help students learn to repair the harm their actions have caused in order to change their behavior. Important questions emerging from adherence to these values are as follows:

- 1) What needs to happen to repair the harm?
- 2) Who needs to be involved in order to maximize success in repairing the harm?
- 3) How do we empower the right people to take ownership and responsibility for their community?

Initial design work for the program evaluation's structure was grounded in discovering and learning more about each school's experiences in integrating the restorative practices embedded in these questions. And, for this phase of the program evaluation, the focus group protocols reflect these areas of emphasis. Over time, these protocols were modified and were customized to align with the Restorative Justice model being implemented in

each school. This individualized feature of the evaluation was incorporated in order to delve into the actual program design used for each school and to provide analysis of the emerging data specific to each school site.

The national interest in the Restorative Justice model results from the growing awareness that existing disciplinary strategies for student misconduct, which have included more punitive penalties such as suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile justice referrals, have not proven effective. Because the research indicates that students who have been suspended or expelled from school are at greater risk of being referred to the juvenile justice system, schools and their communities are seeking alternative solutions to student misbehaviors.¹

Also, because the data indicate that students of color are disproportionately suspended or expelled and that they are also disproportionately referred to the juvenile justice system², the Restorative Justice Model seeks to break this cycle by offering alternative disciplinary strategies in lieu of zero-tolerance policies that fail to take into account the particulars of a given student or situation.

Given that currently there is little research on the efficacy of school-based Restorative Justice programs, this study authorized by Resolutions Northwest provides preliminary insights into differing models of implementation. Models examined have existed from one to four years, vary across levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high), and have been implemented in different school districts with different resources.

The report's organization will include a description of the study's methodology, five school-specific summaries of focus group data from each of the three participating groups (students, teachers, and administrators), conclusions and recommendations by school, an outline of considerations for future program implementation decisions, and an executive summary.

Note: The opportunity for schools to participate in the parent/teacher restorative listening dialogue was made possible through the partnership between RNW and the Portland Parent Union. The Portland Parent Union is a parent advocacy organization whose goal is to give parents an equal voice in their children's education and to empower them to be powerful advocates for their children and each other.

¹ Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project, "Opportunities Suspended: The Devastating Consequences of Zero Tolerance and School Discipline" (paper presented at the National Summit on Zero Tolerance, Washington, DC, June 15 – 16, 2000).

² Council of State Governments Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute, "Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement", New York, 2011.

II. Methodology

Approval for this study was received from Portland State University's Human Subjects Research Review Committee in December of 2011. All individuals (students, teachers, and administrators) who were invited to participate were given the opportunity to attend a focus group session held at their school during times that were identified as convenient to their schedules. They received invitations from the participating school staff and Restorative Justice staff by way of a cover letter/consent form that explained the purpose and voluntary nature of the focus groups. Parental permission was obtained for students invited to participate by means of a cover letter describing the purpose of the focus group and a form to be returned to the Center for Student Success if the parent did not wish for their child to participate.

This research was designed to move beyond documentation that is most easily obtained with quantitative data to what is more difficult to capture: the attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of those affected by the Restorative Justice Project. In order to capture this more personal perspective, the primary methodology employed to gain information for this report was through focus groups, a qualitative research technique. These carefully planned discussions, held in permissive and non-threatening environments, are designed to elicit responses in defined areas of interest. Participants interact and influence each other by responding to ideas and comments of others that occur during the discussion. The result is a highly interactive process that helps the researcher understand some of the variables and certain underlying reasons for people's opinions.

It is important to recognize that the opinions obtained through focus group research do not necessarily reflect and represent the opinions of *all* students nor *all* staff involved in the Restorative Justice Project. The researcher asks representatives of these groups a consistent set of questions in order to identify themes and opinions that are common. The result of this approach is that findings represent a reflection of opinions expressed with sufficient frequency to warrant attention.

Confidentiality assurances were provided to participants in writing prior to all sessions conducted and reiterated at the beginning of every session by the researcher. This assurance of confidentiality increases the likelihood that participants will be candid with the researcher and will express honest beliefs and opinions. The result is that conclusions may be made that one may reasonably assume accurately reflect participants' beliefs and attitudes.

Students and teachers were selected and invited to participate based upon their active involvement in their school's disciplinary process and/or involvement in the design and implementation of the Restorative Justice model in their school. Participants in all three of the study's groups (administrators, teachers, students) contributed to the focus group data based upon a wide-range of experiences with Restorative Justice philosophy and practices.

Focus group protocols, designed in advance of all sessions, initially were prepared to be consistent across groups and schools. As the work progressed, and in consultation with

Restorative Justice staff, these protocols were modified to more carefully probe school-specific aspects of the project's implementation. That way questions were specifically designed to elicit data and feedback in keeping with what was actually occurring at each school. The focus group questions can be found in the appendix of this report.

Each focus group was conducted by the same researcher for the fifteen sessions in the five schools. This constant was intended to contribute to the evaluation's data and analysis by providing a consistent lens. Each session was scheduled for approximately 45 minutes although upon occasion this was modified in response to varied school schedules and conflicts.

All interview questions, protocols, and notes were transcribed and then used as the basis for the school-specific summaries. Direct quotations from group participants do not provide any specific personal identifiers to ensure that participant's confidentiality is maintained.

III. Implementing Restorative Justice in Five Portland Area Schools

1. Rigler School – Portland Public Schools

Rigler School, currently serving students K-8, is scheduled to again undergo grade-level reorganization to a K-5 configuration in the near future. Currently, this neighborhood school serves 570 students from a variety of cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds. The Oregon Department of Education Student Ethnicity online report 2011-2012 for the school indicates the following breakdown: White – 21.2% , Black – 19.9%, Hispanic – 45.6%, Asian/Pacific Islander – 5.5%, American Indian/Alaskan Native – 1.3%, Multi-Ethnic – 6.5%.

With a staff of two administrators, 25 classroom teachers, and 13 educational assistants, this Title 1 school provides students with instructional coaching and support for student behavior and development. Their ESL program currently serves twelve nationalities with 55% of the school's population qualifying for ESL services. The school's overall state report card rating was *Satisfactory*. The school's AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) designation for 2011 was *Not Met*.

The Restorative Justice program at Rigler School began mid-year during the 2010-11 school year with funding provided by a three-year grant from NW Health Foundation. The school's program was assigned one full time Restorative Justice Specialist and the school's administrative staff received the following training:

- Vice principal and counselor participation in 4-days of training
- 1-2 hours of training for all teachers
- On-going professional development for staff

- Limited in-class coaching provided by the school’s Restorative Justice specialist

School-based services have consisted of 1-on-1 student meetings; peer mediation; some teacher-student, family-administrator, and teacher-administrator meetings; classroom circles that included teachers and the RJ Specialist; and listening nights for parents and teachers intended to build relationships.

Focus groups conducted at Rigler School included the following participants:

- Administrators and administrative support staff – 4
- Teachers – 8
- Students – 10

Administrators Focus Group Summary

When asked to comment on the effect of Restorative Justice on the school’s climate and program, this group indicated that they felt this program had assisted with student management. With administrators now using RJ strategies instead of suspension as a primary disciplinary response, students seemed to better understand how to address the harm that they have done and seemed better prepared to re-enter the school program more accountable for their actions. This acceptance of responsibility was beginning to permeate the culture of the school with the RJ disciplinary option focusing on reparation of harm rather than on teaching students a lesson by making an example of an individual. In addition, having the community become involved, and parents and whole classes participating in the process when appropriate, had also become tools for the school to use as it responded to disciplinary challenges.

Administrators cited a specific example of the implementation of these changes when a severe bullying incident occurred. Responses to this incident, led by the RJ Specialist, included the use of community circles and classroom meetings to address harm and plan for positive classroom re-entry. Administrators attributed success in resolving the incident to the RJ process as the students were able to return to class and become more constructive members of that community while proceeding respectfully in their interactions with each other and their peers.

In response to a prompt regarding the effectiveness of the principles of RJ, the administrative group noted that they have been more attentive to their “discipline gap” with students of color. They felt that they had become more creative with consequences and now tended to focus more on repairing the harm as opposed to primarily suspending students. One result of this change was that students now seem to better understand that their actions have wide-ranging consequences.

Sessions provided by the RJ Specialist for families and teachers also received positive reviews by administrative staff. Those that had occurred had been well attended and as the administrators described, they were seen as “little drops in the bucket” that would ultimately add up and make a difference.

The school's work with Restorative Justice and Positive Behavioral Support programs was seen as directly contributing to staff perceptions regarding student discipline. In the past, students were removed from class as the primary disciplinary response – with the RJ principles now in place, there was now an expectation that students would continue to participate in their classes at the same time they learned to become more thoughtful about what they had done. The agreements that were reached between the students involved emphasized students accepting responsibility for their actions and changing their behavior accordingly. A continued focus with teachers on the need for the school's disciplinary model to not focus on “eye-for-an-eye” consequences had evolved in the past year and a half, but this approach will continue to require on-going training and support for it to become more embedded into the school's program.

Administrative staff carefully reflected their concerns about the requisite amount of time necessary for Restorative Justice to be implemented properly in their school. In order for this change to be fully integrated into the school's culture and climate, they strongly felt that it would take “big systems level thinking”. To interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, they would need assistance with gathering data, studying the effects of their interventions, and drawing informed conclusions about changes in school culture. In order to achieve this philosophical shift, they knew that they needed to reach out to communities of color, continue their work on closing the achievement gap and strive to develop the community's understanding of the need for dollars and resources to be targeted toward prevention rather than incarceration.

Also, schools and the district will need to continue to commit the necessary resources in support of this effort: staffing, time, and training all directed toward developing teacher-wide ownership of the RJ model. At Rigler, administrators felt that significant progress had been made toward this end over the past year of work. Traction was now underway, although teacher/administrator practice had not yet entirely changed.

The administrative staff continued to express concerns knowing that this is a three-year grant, and this heightened their apprehension about what would be possible once the grant was completed. Knowing that any substantive school change takes longer than three years, they were particularly anxious about what would happen when they no longer had an RJ Specialist assigned to their school.

Concluding remarks from this focus group exemplified the depth of commitment to the Restorative Justice model from the school's administrators: “Personally I feel like this is the right model for our school” and, “We are sold”. And they added that it will be important for their district to consider implementing this alternative disciplinary model district wide given the transient nature of many of the school district's families.

Teachers Focus Group Summary

Perhaps the most significant effect of Restorative Justice on the program at Rigler School as identified consistently by the teachers group has been the opportunity to communicate more with parents. Teachers expressed that for the first time they have had an opportunity for challenging conversations with members of their parent community. During their

“Restorative Listening” parent-teacher evening, the conversations revealed that students who were particularly difficult for the teachers to manage were also challenging their parent in a similar fashion. Teachers revealed that they came away with a deeper understanding and acknowledgement that not only is their job a difficult one, but that the responsibilities of these parents was equally, if not more, difficult. Teachers learned that many of these parents were single moms (some of the teachers self-identified as single moms also) with multiple children and their associated challenges, and the empathy created between the parents and teachers will serve both groups well as challenges arise. The common ground established was that both parents and teachers shared in the difficult work of providing an appropriate and productive educational experience for these challenging children.

Teachers also felt somewhat reassured that parents wanted to be involved in the school and they expressed a desire to increase their communication with the school and staff. They will need to work together to change parental attitudes while they help other parents understand the importance of communicating with the school. With an objective of working in unison to solve problems that exist both at home and at school, the likelihood of improving student success in both arenas will be improved.

Teachers recognized that this was a beginning and that more work was needed to increase the number of parents who come to listening sessions at the school. They recognized that many parents were working, had a difficult time getting to the school, and also many may feel intimidated entering the school setting. They strongly feel that this “communication gap” must be bridged.

One teacher spoke fervently about her changed perspective that emerged as a result of this parent-teacher interaction; she now better understood the parent’s point of view and recognized that it was not that they didn’t care - they were doing the best that they could. A shared understanding that all these committed adults were trying their best and were coming together to accomplish a common end provided hope for the school’s teachers.

Teachers stated that they thought that the climate of the school had shifted as a result of the RJ work that was underway. They felt like there was not as much bullying, and there was less of a punitive response to student misbehavior and students were less angry. The underlying philosophy that adults would actively work with students to repair the harm that had been done and would problem-solve with them to positively resolve their disciplinary issues had contributed to the school’s overall improved climate. They found that students seemed to be more relaxed knowing that they had somewhere “safe” that they could go to work through difficult conflicts in a productive way.

Another climate change noted by teachers was related to the atmosphere at staff meetings. They said that in the past staff meetings were very contentious with frequent arguing and were not viewed as very productive. They identified current changes in practice such as circle discussions being incorporated more, that there was an effort underway to help staff get to know each other, and community-building activities were beginning to make a difference.

The school's transition in disciplinary strategies from a punitive model to one that was more directed toward reparation of harm and taking responsibilities for one's actions was another effect of RJ identified by teachers. The need for time allocated to deal with problems in different ways and training for staff around these strategies were seen as critical to the foundation of this effort. One teacher in particular stated, "This is a testament to why people are here – their voices are now heard and Restorative Listening is a part of this."

Teachers during this focus group session introduced the concept of leveraged resources related to RJ implementation and were probed further on the meaning of this concept. Their knowledge that this program was funded by a three-year grant prompted this response as they clearly identified the school's place in the transition process. They felt that they are in the most "painful" place right now and that a five-year commitment would be necessary to embed the program into the school culture. Their primary concerns seemed to be that the district would need to fund this project on a long-term basis and they were well aware of the on-going budget cuts underway across the district.

When asked about RJ principles that they had concerns about, teachers pointed to different responses to referrals based upon race. This heightened concern that students may be treated differently with a disciplinary response based upon their race was identified as one reason that they were not frequently writing referrals. Because this response was not further clarified in this discussion, further study of this issue is necessary. They did acknowledge that their RJ Specialist had provided them with a communication bridge between themselves and their administrators and he had assisted them in talking through whether this issue was real or not.

Time continued to be repeatedly identified as a concern related to the changes associated with implementation of the Restorative Justice program at Rigler. Teachers expressed concern about their capacity to teach and do the appropriate behavioral interventions. They knew that full integration of this model would involve additional time and allocation of resources, and they expressed repeated concerns about their teaching responsibilities in relation to these expectations. Clearly they were well aware of their students' levels of academic achievement as identified through their test scores, and they felt anxious about meeting both the academic expectations and behavioral challenges at the same time.

Student Focus Group Summary

When students in this group were asked what they knew about Restorative Justice, they talked about knowing that they needed to use words to solve problems (as opposed to hitting or pushing). They did seem to understand that if they misbehaved they would be sent to an adult for consequences. They noted that they felt that some of these adults dealt more fairly with resolving the situation than did others – in particular they identified the RJ Specialist as being fair.

Preliminary Considerations for Restorative Justice at Rigler School

- The culture of the school has begun to change specifically in relation to building enhanced relationships with students and families around disciplinary issues
- All of the school's constituent groups clearly understand that disciplinary responses now focus on reparation of harm rather than punitive responses
- Concerns persist across all groups related to equity in relation to discipline; moreover, the question continues to arise about a discipline gap with students of color. There appears to be a perception among teachers and students that administrators/staff do not administer discipline equally to students.
- The need for students to accept responsibility for their actions and change their behavior appears to be universally understood. Additional supports for students must be provided while pursuing this goal.
- All adults participating in the focus groups identified time and resources as critical issues that will be required for the Restorative Justice program to continue to grow and flourish
- Communication across all groups (teachers, parents, administrators, and students) has been positively impacted by the Restorative Justice work
- The climate at Rigler School has improved as a result of Restorative Justice efforts
- A collective commitment to the Restorative Justice model appears to be in place at the school. Given the requisite amount of time and resources needed to support continued program implementation, Rigler appears to be a school where Restorative Justice will be able to make a real difference.

2. Parkrose Middle School – Parkrose School District

Parkrose Middle School, serving students grades 6-8, currently enrolls 768 students and is the Parkrose School District's only middle school. The school is located in an urbanized area of Portland's suburban city of Parkrose. The school's free and reduced lunch eligible student percentage presently is 75.3% with 14.9% of the school's student body comprised of ESL students. The Oregon Department of Education Student Ethnicity online report 2011-2012 for the school indicates the following breakdown: White – 35.5%, Black – 12.4%, Hispanic – 24.3%, Asian/Pacific Islander – 21.2%, American Indian/Alaskan Native – 1.3%, and Multi-Ethnic – 5.4%.

The school has 40 full-time teachers, 2 administrators and has a student-teacher ratio of 20:1. In 2011, the overall state report card rating for the school was *Satisfactory*. Since the 2008-09 school year, the school has consistently failed to meet federal standards and has

been designated as *Not Meeting* AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) each year. They do not receive Title 1 funding.

The Restorative Justice Project began at Parkrose Middle School in the 2008-09 school year. Of the five schools included in this study, it has received RJ services for the longest duration as well as the largest amount of resource allocation. They have one full time equivalent staff member dedicated to this project, and the city and county have split in half the funding support for the school's RJ program each year. They also have been provided with support for their administrative staff, one teacher and one counselor to receive varied levels of Restorative Justice training. Included in the services that are provided are one-on-one meetings with students facilitated by the RJ Specialist; a small number of meetings between teachers, family and administrative staff; and some assigned community service options for students.

Focus groups at Parkrose Middle School included the following participants:

- Administrators and administrative support staff - 3
- Teachers – 5
- Students (two groups) – 6

Administrator Focus Group Summary

When asked to comment on the effect of the Restorative Justice Program at Parkrose Middle School to date, the administrative staff noted that it had had a positive effect with students, and it had provided an opportunity to mediate conflicts before a physical fight occurred. This is of particular significance as it allows students to remain in school and to not fall under the requirements of the district's exclusionary disciplinary policies. One important aspect of RJ in this school was that students were now much more familiar with this opportunity to problem-solve up front and had even begun to access RJ services on their own volition. On occasion some students have requested that a teacher or an administrator allow them to go to the RJ specialist for problem-solving assistance. The project had allowed parents and students an opportunity to work out issues through mediation, and one result was that sometimes problems were solved before they reached the main office. From the administrative staff's perspective, this was a clear benefit of the RJ project in that it provided an avenue for keeping the students out of the punitive disciplinary system.

In terms of impact on the school's climate, administrators indicated the most significant change had been that students now engaged in student-to-student problem-solving. One of the hopes expressed by administrators for options to handle disciplinary issues was that they were able to incorporate an increased emphasis on problem-solving that resulted in more prevention ultimately resulting in an improved overall school atmosphere.

Parkrose Middle School also has in place a PBIS behavioral model which works well in tandem with the RJ effort. Administrators believed that these two strategies should work hand-in-hand and they expressed a desire to see this occur in a more seamless manner.

They felt that increased prevention of disciplinary issues was paramount in their school and these two programs working together made this outcome more probable.

A consistent concern expressed by administrative staff was that students needed to have more positive models for resolving conflict situations. They pointed out that some students see conflict in their homes that is not handled in an appropriate fashion, and they need to see positive alternatives in language and behavior for resolving conflict.

When probed regarding RJ principles and their effectiveness, administrators agreed that one of the most significant impacts of this effort was that students saw the effect of their actions on others. By putting in place systems that provided students with the opportunity to tell their side of the story, to be listened to and to listen to others, the overall impact on the school's exclusionary discipline numbers and school climate should be apparent in the long term. By having community service options available (e.g. trash clean-up, helping at the Oregon Food Bank and Farmers Market) as a disciplinary response, administrators recognized that this directly benefitted the school and community, and provided students with a tangible way to contribute positively as a result of a negative situation.

In the long term, administrators felt that it was positive to help students understand how they got into a physical conflict initially and to help them to prevent such conflicts in the future, and by taking them through the RJ process they would be better prepared to manage difficult situations in the future.

Another objective identified by the administrative group was to keep their students out of the juvenile justice system when possible. They saw that Restorative Justice allows for that opportunity and they often used this option for parents who were involved in a school-based dispute related to their students. Sometimes students and their families saw RJ as a "safe" option and would access it in lieu of school administrators and police.

The issue of sustainability of the Restorative Justice program was definitely at the forefront of thinking by the administrative staff. They were concerned that in order to ensure sustainability they must have an RJ Specialist assigned to their school. Given that the district has been in a budget reduction cycle over the past few years, they felt strongly that this position must be funded by outside resources. Currently the student-teacher ratio is quite high as a result of staff reductions. The school has lost a school counselor, and administrators vehemently noted that they are not interested in cutting another math or LA teacher to sustain this program. Although they expressed repeatedly that they valued this program tremendously, the current budgetary circumstances caused them to prioritize classroom teachers above an RJ Specialist if district funding was required.

Lastly, administrators pointed out that they felt it was of the utmost importance that the RJ efforts become woven into what was going on in the school already. It will be important for the model's long-term viability for it to be "institutionalized" and directly integrated into and blended with the school's overall program. For this to occur, they felt that it will be necessary for any "outside" group (such as RJ) to work within the existing structure of their school and for that program to become an internal initiative and not imposed externally. They emphasized that they remain committed to the Restorative Justice program.

Teachers Focus Group Summary

Teachers clearly identified as a key impact of the Restorative Justice program at their middle school that students had a clear understanding of their actions in relation to possible consequences. Students participated in a process that helped them to develop their knowledge of how their actions affected others.

The consequence of becoming involved with the RJ Specialist didn't allow students to hide from the others with whom they had the initial conflict. An opportunity was provided for them to participate in learning how to problem-solve differently.

Teachers have found that students no longer avoided a disciplinary response. And when they were referred for an altercation, they no longer seemed to dread the response but saw it instead as an opportunity to seek constructive resolution to the situation. Teachers felt that this had contributed to an improved climate in the school and classrooms. Once a student returned to their classroom following a conflict, students seemed to come back without the "level of tension" apparent in the past. They seemed to be able to more peacefully coexist with their fellow student(s) regardless of the issue that led to the dispute.

Teachers strongly felt that oftentimes their students lacked the skills to resolve conflict peacefully, and the administrative staff did not have time to spend working with them to teach these skills. On the other hand, the school's RJ Specialist spent a great deal of time getting the "back story" and had become heavily invested in building relationships with students. Teachers acknowledged that it takes time to get to the bottom of some issues in order to resolve underlying concerns and neither teachers nor administrators had that kind of time.

Overall teachers hoped that their school might improve the way it handles discipline by offering meaningful incentives to offset consequences. They suggested that students needed to think that they were earning something positive as a way to divert them from engaging in negative behaviors.

Teachers pointed out that middle school students often lacked the ability to see outside themselves and they had not yet developed their capacity for having empathy for others. Also middle school students did not fully understand the way that their actions might affect others. These qualities often led to bullying behaviors on the part of students and without a concerted effort to help them understand the impact that they had on others, these behaviors would be perpetuated.

Continued apprehension about students missing class for disciplinary reasons was expressed by this focus group. Their concern was equally for those students who physically were out of the classroom as well as those students whose "mind is out of the room". Teachers clearly understood their primary responsibility for students' academic progress and acknowledge that without students being "present", this challenge was intensified.

Similar to comments made by the school’s administrative staff, teachers strongly felt that oftentimes their students lacked positive models for problem-solving. They find that students don’t know how to appropriately handle conflict with peers and/or teachers, and they do not know how to use respectful language when they are upset. Although teachers felt that this was an important aspect of students’ learning, they did not feel that they were qualified nor trained to teach this type of curriculum.

Teachers were pleased to have an effective mediator assigned to their school. Although they did not feel that the RJ Specialist should be used to “take the place of our counselor”, they did feel that this position has been very effective. In particular, students now had the opportunity to tell their side of the story, develop agreements and make decisions related to improving the situation, take ownership for their actions, and participate in choosing the resolution to the situation.

When asked specifically about their own use of RJ principles and how that went, teachers indicated that when they used these strategies in the classroom setting, trust was built. They felt strongly that they needed additional training – although they noted that some had been offered after school but it was difficult to find time to attend. Conflict resolution strategies were a theme that they repeatedly identified as a focus for this training.

In order for RJ principles to become an integrated part of how teachers, students and administrators approach discipline at Parkrose Middle School, teachers felt that more staff must become involved. This will take time and commitment. Their parent community will need to become more involved as well. An overall cultural and attitudinal shift will be imperative if the result is to be a significant improvement in the school’s climate.

Student Focus Group(s) Summary

When asked about the effects of Restorative Justice on them, students cited that it has been helpful in solving kid-to-kid conflicts. One student identified himself as a “trouble-maker” and went on to say that the RJ Specialist (Mr. Garcia) had helped him to keep these behaviors from “spiraling out of control”. He pointed out that Mr. Garcia had “helped him with his conflicts, helped to keep people calm, and helps him learn how to talk things out”.

Students agreed that it would be unrealistic to expect that there would never be another fight at their school and stated their belief that there would always be problems. They praised, however, the RJ Specialist for helping to settle conflicts down when these incidents occurred. In particular, they felt that he actively and sincerely listened to both sides of the story. Then, he worked with all involved parties to develop an agreement about moving forward peacefully. Students enthusiastically pointed out that oftentimes as a result of these procedures they never had another problem with that student (or those students).

Students identified one significant learning resulting from their involvement in RJ as beginning to see things from the other person’s perspective. They noted a heightened understanding of how others were feeling - and this provided them with added perspective. The process of meeting with the other student(s) involved in the dispute and

talking things out helped them understand more fully the situation and where “the other student was coming from”.

Students’ perspectives on relationships between school staff and parents presented some insight into the way in which they perceived adult’s capacity to problem-solve. One student in particular expressed that she was embarrassed when her mother came into school and began yelling and demanding things. Other students added to this with their thoughts about how it was not helpful when adults overreacted – and, how this behavior didn’t really work to solve problems. This mature perspective presented by the students as they discussed their behavioral challenges was truly quite impressive.

Students responded to a probe about race, ethnicity, language and culture by indicating that they did not see this as a problem in their school. Students did feel that students “hang-out” with others from the same group, but they did not specify that this resulted in problems.

When asked to discuss what they might want changed about discipline in their school, they identified negative consequences for self-defense responses to other student’s overt behaviors as being problematic. Apparently, when another student becomes aggressive, the recipient of this behavior is treated the same when consequences are implemented. Students felt strongly that if they were “defending themselves” they should not be treated in the same way as the aggressor.

In response to a question about resolving a conflict between school staff and a student, student focus group participants clearly noted that at times adults don’t want to take the time to help them solve problems. Their too-quick responses to a volatile situation simply resulted in referrals and suspensions rather than taking the time to help students work through challenges.

In conclusion, the question was asked about what the students might change about discipline and how it was handled in their school. They all agreed that fewer referrals and suspensions would be their preference. They would like to see more disciplinary options such as picking up trash and other community service types of alternatives. They continued to emphasize that the punitive types of punishment did not change student behaviors and they thought that it would be more effective to provide a forum for students to talk through their problems.

Preliminary Considerations for Restorative Justice at Parkrose Middle School

- All interviewed agreed that it is imperative for the school to continue to find ways to mediate conflicts that help students and families problem-solve challenging situations in productive ways
- A blending of behavioral programs such as Restorative Justice and PBIS assist in preventing many conflicts and should continue to be integrated into the school’s program

- Administrators, teachers and students all agreed that it is imperative for students to engage with positive role models to develop effective problem-solving strategies (oftentimes these are not present in the home)
- One of the most effective components of RJ as noted by all participants is the emphasis on students' learning related to the effect of their actions on others and the resulting empathy that this creates. This is seen as positively contributing to the overall school climate as well as the climate in individual classrooms.
- Additional training in Restorative Justice principles, particularly conflict resolution, is important to staff. This will take a commitment of time and resources. Additional community involvement should be a part of this effort.
- More alternative disciplinary options should be developed
- Students in the school clearly recognize the value of the Restorative Justice program and consistently agree that it has directly helped them in resolving difficult issues. Time allocated for adults to help students resolve conflicts will be required.
- Administrative staff and teaching staff all agree about the importance of having a full-time RJ Specialist assigned to their school. They recognize the positive contributions that the program has made to their school and to improving its climate. They remain convinced, however, that this program must be supported with outside of district resources during this time of severely constrained budgets.

3. Floyd Light Middle School – David Douglas School District

Floyd Light Middle School, located in Portland's east county, is one of the district's three middle schools serving students in grades 6 – 8. Current enrollment is 804 students with 79.4% of the school's student body qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The Oregon Department of Education Student Ethnicity online report 2011-2012 for the school indicates the following breakdown: White – 45.6%, Black – 10.6%, Hispanic – 25.2%, Asian/Pacific Islander – 12.5%, American Indian/Alaskan Native – 0.9%, and Multi-Ethnic – 5.2%.

The school's ESL population is 17.3% of enrolled students, and the student-teacher ratio is 16:1. School staff includes 2 administrators, one counselor and 51 teachers. The school's overall school rating on their state Report Card for 2010-11 was *Satisfactory* with ratings in the categories of *Attendance* and *Participation Rates* noted as *Outstanding*. The school was labeled, however, as *Not Meeting* on their 2010-11 Final AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) Report for the first time in the past three years as a result of ratings of *Not Meeting* in the areas of English/Language Arts AYP and Math AYP. The school is a Title 1 funded school.

Support for the school's Restorative Justice Program was minimal and split between the city and the county. This support included 1/6th of an FTE, with three staff members (a

counselor, a vice principal, and a security person) attending four days of Restorative Justice training during the spring of 2011. Also, the school’s counselor attended one day of “circle training” in fall of 2011.

The RJ Specialist (1/6th assignment) provided the school with the following services over the course of the 2011-12 school year: co-facilitation of weekly meetings with Student Advisory Committee at the SUN program, on call status and available on site once per week, presentation to the full staff related to RJ (20 minute presentation at a staff meeting), presentation to a 6th grade health class, and information accompanied by a resource display in the staff room. Although the RJ Specialist was at the school and available to the administrative and counseling staff one day per week throughout the school year, this service was not fully utilized.

Focus groups at Floyd Light Middle School included the following participants:

- Administrators and administrative support staff (counselor and security officer) – 4
- Teachers – 4
- Students – 8

Administrative Focus Group Summary

The first probe to the administrative group was an inquiry related to possible changes in school climate during 2011-12 as a result of the Restorative Justice program. This group indicated that they did not feel that the school climate had changed as they are just in the beginning phase of the program and that it is not yet up and fully running at their school. The group did note that the RJ Specialist had provided instruction in RJ principles in their after-school SUN program and in some 6th grade classrooms. They stated that in a small number of instances, students had initiated requests to problem-solve some challenging situations themselves. The administrators attributed this to RJ efforts with students.

In relation to hoping to improve the way in which discipline is handled at Floyd Light Middle School, administrators identified a need to continue to seek consequences that fit specific violations. They were hopeful that adults in classrooms would develop their skills in order to hold appropriate conversations about behavior with students. They would like to see more “circles” in classrooms during which students have the opportunity to engage in conversations about what is “going on in the school”. Administrators recognized that teachers would need additional training to develop the skills to facilitate circles, and they envisioned this strategy as fitting into the school’s homeroom structure. The administrators sensed that teachers’ interests were piqued about RJ during a staff meeting presentation provided by the RJ Specialist because 8-10 teachers approached them following the meeting and asked for additional information about Restorative Justice and its principles and strategies. They hoped in time to change the disciplinary conversation in the school from focusing on actions and consequences to a more productive conversation about how a situation might have been handled differently.

RJ principles that administrators saw as potentially effective in their school setting included developing students' understanding of the impact of harm on someone else, bringing the victim and the perpetrator together to discuss the impact of their actions, and helping students to understand how another individual might feel as a result of their actions. They felt strongly that when students were put in a situation where they had the opportunity to develop their own solutions to difficult situations and they had guidelines, the RJ model had the potential to reduce discipline referrals and suspensions (and hopefully the “number of these students who could end up in prison”).

When asked about fuller implementation of Restorative Justice at Floyd Light Middle School, administrators agreed that they would be pleased if they had the “Parkrose model” with a full-time RJ Specialist available to run groups and assist with “mending social problems”.

This group acknowledged that much of the program's success was dependent on the skills of the RJ Specialist, but they felt that the program was a “great idea”. They recognized that it takes a great deal of time, resources and support to implement the program well to produce optimal results.

One administrator in particular expressed strong feelings that more clarity was needed before moving ahead with program implementation. This individual expressed concerns about having the “time to sit around and talk about things”, and how consequences aligned with the RJ model would be aligned with current administrative job expectations.

As is the case in all schools receiving Restorative Justice program resources, Floyd Light Middle School has also experienced significant budgetary reductions over the course of the past few years. Two years ago, the administrative staff had two additional staff members to provide help with student management, but with the elimination of these positions, administrators now either have assumed these responsibilities or they no longer get done.

Another aspect of the school's challenges identified by the administrative group is the school's changing demographic resulting in students needing more intensive “social training to function successfully in our school”. Their sense was that this population of students ends up more frequently being referred to the office for disciplinary reasons. They understood that RJ could provide teachers and students with increased alternative options to more effectively deal with conflict.

In order to expand and sustain the Restorative Justice program at Floyd Light, the administrative staff felt that the following must be in place: staff training that provides specific strategies and skills for teachers to effectively use alternative behavioral interventions, and an on-site resource person available at least three days per week to provide assistance with implementation of RJ principles.

They resoundingly emphasized that they feel this was a “great program and we don't want to see it go away”. They felt that RJ has a great deal of potential for their school and a long-term impact on society.

Teacher Focus Group Summary

When asked about the ways in which the school climate had changed during 2011-2012 at Floyd Light Middle School, teachers indicated that they felt that they had many more difficult students to deal with and less support to manage them. They emphasized that as a result of budget cuts, disciplinary incidents were increasing and that they had “constant battles with unruly behavior”. Another result of the budget reductions that teachers identified was the loss of a significant number of “excellent teachers”.

Of paramount concern to the teacher group was that students were less responsive to traditional behavioral interventions and didn’t seem to care if they get another office referral. They found that detention was no longer effective because it was not enforced, and more importantly students clearly knew that there were not real consequences. They stated that “there is no bite to the consequences” or in other words, these consequences are not prompting a change in student behaviors.

Another budgetary reduction that has impacted the climate was the loss of an administrator assigned specifically to 6th graders. When this resource was available to teachers, the administrator was able to find the student the same day and respond to the behavior in a timely fashion.

Overall teachers were highly concerned that the current system of disciplinary consequences did not change student behavior and was ineffective. They noted that their school model was a “1950s model when mom and dad were at home” and that the consequences currently relied on did not seem to have the desired impact on student behavior. Teachers expressed concern about the preponderance of black students with discipline referrals and felt strongly that they did not have an adequate menu of responses for students with multiple behavioral referrals. Given that current class sizes were significantly larger, less support was available to teachers and classes were harder to manage, these teachers clearly expressed anxiety about the future of their school.

In relation to what their hopes were for how the school might improve its handling of discipline, teachers felt strongly that if students could better understand the consequences of their behavior, this awareness could have a positive impact. They concurred with the philosophy behind the RJ model – students understanding that if they hurt a person, they need to go to that person and help them heal (“if you make a mess, you clean it up”). They acknowledged that oftentimes their students needed to learn this standard of morality.

They complained that consistency was needed for the disciplinary system to work and felt strongly that the current system (punitive model of referral, detention, suspension) lacked integrity. They noted that children were very sensitive to injustice, particularly when rules were inconsistently or unjustly applied. The example of five days of detention assigned for gum chewing vs. one day assigned for tardiness was provided to illuminate this point.

When asked about their level of knowledge related to the Restorative Justice Program, teachers acknowledged that they knew very little, that they had only a brief presentation at a staff meeting, and that they knew some of the terminology. They did seem to know

enough to recognize that the RJ model has the potential to make a big difference if the program is implemented well and with consistency. It appears that given additional administrative support for the RJ project, teachers would be receptive to fuller implementation.

Another probe related to Restorative Justice principles asked teachers to consider what they currently had in place to help students solve their own problems. Teachers felt that they did not have the resources or the time currently to see such strategies actualized. If given the opportunity for a fully implemented RJ program at Floyd Light, they asked that it be fully explained to students, families, and teachers.

Student Focus Group Summary

When asked about how people treated each other in the school, the students participating in the focus group stressed that this school was not a “happy place”. They felt that their school was a “disrespectful place” in which “people are mean to each other”. The following statement seems to summarize the group’s response to the probe about how people treat each other; “This school is not one of those schools where everyone is happy. People here talk negatively about other people. There are not people you can really trust at this school, and people turn against each other.”

The next focus group question attempted to probe further into this issue and relationships. In continued probing about adult-student relationships, students voiced a concern that both teachers and administrators did not give them the freedom to speak. Rather, they seemed to interpret student’s desire to speak as back-talk, and students strongly felt that “they are not treated right”.

A number of students proceeded to note that in many instances their parents did not feel welcomed by the school staff. An incident was cited in which a parent came to the school to meet with the administrator and the parent’s perception of the situation was that the school was a racist place. Students seemed to feel that on occasion assumptions were made about their families prior to school officials having the opportunity to meet with them. This judgment was stated on more than one occasion and by more than one student and therefore warrants being included in this summary.

Another student cited an incident in which an administrator said to the student; “Teachers have had it up to here with you and now you will feel their pain.” The student described this response as revenge and went on to state that “this adult shouldn’t act like a kid who was being rude”.

In another incident that was described, the student stated that their teacher accused a number of students of being gang members and as a result treated them as though they were breaking the law. Students in the focus group concurred that this was not appropriate and teachers should not be making assumptions.

One insight provided by this group was that there is a desire on the part of a number of students to change these negative relationships. One student went on to state that; “We are failing as students because they are failing as teachers.”

When asked about what they knew about the Restorative Justice program and if it had been helpful during the year, students agreed that the focus group session itself was helpful to them – and, they had a forum in which to talk about how they were feeling. They wished they had a similar school forum in which they could speak respectfully with adults about how they were feeling. They wished administrators would sincerely listen to them and incorporate some of their ideas into the daily life of their school.

The climate of the school was described by the focus group students as being all about punishment – and, rather than asking them why they did something or what led to these actions, the response was consistently that they did something that will result in them getting into trouble. They felt that suspension and detention were not effective in changing their behaviors and described them as “stupid”.

Probing this group of students further to delve into what they believed would make their school a better place resulted in the following thoughts: teachers should be more respectful of students, believe the students, and give students the freedom to speak. Teachers should listen to students, engage in real (not fake) communication, and try to understand what students are trying to say.

The session concluded with one student putting it rather simply in the statement, “Tell them to try”.

Preliminary Considerations for Restorative Justice at Floyd Light Middle School

- The Restorative Justice Program is only modestly in place at Floyd Light Middle School and some focus group participants had little to no substantive information about the program
- Agreement was apparent in all groups that a Restorative Justice program could contribute to more effective problem-solving between parents, students, and school staff which is critical to improving the school’s climate
- There is recognition that some of the school’s current challenges are a result of significant budget (staffing) reductions, a change in student and family demographics, and students who are more difficult to deal with while there is less available support
- The school’s current disciplinary model is not viewed as effective (referrals, detentions, suspensions), and it could be improved through implementation of the principles of RJ (i.e. recognition of harm, impact of one’s actions and their effect on others, development of empathy)
- A concern exists around racial tensions. Teachers express concern about the disproportionate number of black students with discipline referrals and feel

strongly that they do not have a good menu of disciplinary responses at their disposal for all students. On the other hand, students expressed that they and their families feel that the school is a “racist place”. This issue warrants attention.

- Students agree that the school’s climate is not positive for them. They articulately verbalize their wish for a forum in which they could respectfully express their concerns about their school and be heard

4. Grant High School – Portland Public School District

Grant High School, located in Portland’s Grant Park neighborhood, currently enrolls 1,610 students and is the district’s largest high school. The high school serves students in grades 9-12 and has a long and storied history. The high school opened in 1924 and continues to be a source of pride in the community. The school graduates 82% of their students on time compared to the district’s 62% and the state’s 67%. The Oregon Department of Education Student Ethnicity online report 2011-2012 for the school indicates the following breakdown: White – 66.1%, Black – 17.1%, Hispanic – 4.8%, Asian/Pacific Islander – 4.9%, American Indian/Alaskan Native – 0.8%, and Multi-Ethnic – 6.5%.

The staff at Grant includes three administrators, five counselors, six student services staff, 61 teachers, and five campus monitors. School performance data for the combined 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, shows that 86% of students *meet, exceed, or meet growth* in reading while 72.3% do so in math. Since the school year 2008-09, Grant has received an AYP designation of *Not Met* each year. Sub-groups *Not Meeting* overall AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) in English/Language Arts include *Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and Black (not of Hispanic origin)* with Math AYP *Not Meeting* in the sub-group *Students with Disabilities*. The school does not receive Title 1 funding.

Support for the school’s Restorative Justice program was provided by the city and the county. This support included 1/6 of an FTE with four staff members (1 discipline vice principal, 1 part-time on-site RJ coordinator, 1 counselor, 1 campus monitor) attending a four-day RJ training session in spring 2011. Also, two staff members (1 counselor and 1 RJ coordinator) attended one day of “circle training” in fall of 2011.

The RJ Specialist assigned to Grant (1/6th time) provided the school with the following services over the course of the 2011-12 school year: attendance at weekly security meetings to provide “restorative” help and guidance, being on-call for escalated discipline issues, meeting with counselors for feedback about current RJ use, assisted with presentation at a staff meeting in the fall, assisted with preparation of “on the fly” forms for documentation of RJ attempts and interventions by teachers and administrators, regular meetings with RJ site coordinator, recruitment along with RJ site coordinator and school psychologist of students for an RJ student team, and creation and distribution of a needs assessment survey in conjunction with the RJ student team.

Focus groups at Grant High School included the following participants:

- Administrators and administrative support staff (campus monitor and school RJ coordinator) – 5
- Teachers – 3
- Students – 5

Administrator Focus Group Summary

When asked to respond to a probe about changes in the school's climate in 2011-2012, administrators noted that previously all disciplinary issues went straight to them while during the past year more teachers and other staff were involved in responding to disciplinary issues. In particular, one campus monitor and the school RJ coordinator were identified as serving as "filters" for the RJ process.

The group noted that change in the school's culture was a process and RJ had an important role in that process. It appears that discipline currently had less of a punitive nature than it did in past years when "writing referrals on students was simple and these then became the assistant principal's problems to solve". Restorative Justice was identified as contributing to improving this situation as more adults became involved in the disciplinary process (in particular classroom teachers).

The administrative group noted that there was staff buy-in to RJ and its implementation at Grant as teachers now had other options that helped make the classroom climate more productive. Administrators felt that RJ helped teachers to communicate and to be heard and to better address the child's needs. Of particular importance was the group's concurrence that the culture in the school "feels good right now, there have not been any fights in a long time, and the school seems like a better place for students to get their needs met". They felt that RJ put a "face on discipline" and they now had terms with which they could better communicate about behavioral issues (e.g. harm, restitution). This had resulted in a process that was easier for people to accept and buy into.

In relation to their hopes for how their school might improve its handling of discipline, the administrative group noted that their true desire was to create an atmosphere conducive to learning at the highest level by diminishing disruptive conduct. They felt that the key to success was to work with their teaching staff to help them be more proactive and less reactive.

Of particular concern was the issue of disciplinary equity. They noted that there appears to be a disproportionate number of students of color receiving disciplinary referrals, and they felt that they needed to dig deeper to find out who these students were and who the adults were who were involved in order to ensure that discipline in the school was equitable.

When asked about which aspects of RJ that they felt were effective, they identified the principle of "harm". One administrator stated that he had never used this term in his work with students until last year, and now he does so to enhance students' understanding of who was hurt as a result of their actions. One participant stated that "harm is the key

factor” – when a situation was identified as a crime then the response became a punishment. But, when the issue was clarified to be about the harm that had been done, then the response became what methods and perspectives needed to be addressed to eliminate the problem entirely so it did not occur again.

RJ strategies were identified as contributing to building relationships between staff and families. Oftentimes the result was to dig deeper into issues with families in order for the administrators to develop their understanding of the circumstances that students lived with. The example provided to exemplify this premise was when a sophomore student was caught “tagging” the school. Initially, the administrative staff’s response was to have him arrested. But upon further conversations with the student and his family, they knew that he was struggling in school, the family lacked the resources to pay for the clean-up, and the student was not able to pay the bill either. So they came up with a plan to have the student work the debt off during the summer. This resulted in the student re-committing himself to being at school and being a good student. The parents were very appreciative as the administrators had figured out a response to their child’s behavior that was a meaningful. They cited RJ as influencing them in this situation in numerous ways.

One of their significant comments during this part of the discussion was about the importance of relationship building. Administrators felt strongly that when you made the person more angry and retaliatory, the results were never positive – but in the case cited about the “tagger,” the student was appreciative of the school’s response, learned from his mistakes, and so administrators were far more optimistic that they wouldn’t again work with this student in the school’s disciplinary system.

RJ principles that the administrative group felt they understood well included the concept of harm, the perpetrator accepting responsibility for the harm, and students developing strategies to make amends for the harm. Lack of time and resources to really implement RJ correctly was the primary concern of this group. They felt that the RJ resources were spread thin across a number of schools and they strongly suggested that a few schools be targeted with the support of resources and additional training. A strong commitment to this program was in place at Grant.

Administrators shared that disciplinary referrals have decreased in number this year from last year’s high of 992 to this year’s 408, and they felt that there was a reason (or perhaps multiple reasons) for this change in the numbers. One group participant stated vehemently that “you can’t take away from the fact that RJ made a difference in these numbers”. They noted that they are now taking the time to pay more attention to individual situations and they have made a commitment to investing in creating better solutions. The two administrative support staff members assigned to the Restorative Justice program were identified as “kid magnets” by their colleagues in this group. They acknowledged that students gravitated to them when having a bad day because the students knew that they cared, and they truly believed that these adults were there for them. There was concurrence across this group that this was exactly the type of team they want to build at Grant.

The final probe for this group was about how the RJ work may be sustained over time at their school. They felt strongly that all adults (administrators and teachers) had bought in to the Restorative Justice program and that they had in place the components to be a model school for the program. Given an appropriate investment in its continued development at Grant, they felt their school could provide a model program for the rest of the city.

Also they acknowledged that regardless of the dollars allocated, RJ was now a part of the culture of the school. Another point was that they continued to need to work on issues related to equity of discipline. One administrator stated that too many students of color were being sent out of the classrooms by white teachers, and that teachers needed to be more open-minded and willing to reconsider some of their practices and choices (*because this statement is of a highly controversial nature, it is mandatory that further research is done prior to this perception being reiterated*). The administrators pointed out that currently black students in their school accounted for 50-60% of the disciplinary issues. Although they recognized the complexity of this issue, they were also clear that RJ alone would not solve this dilemma. The huge disproportion of students of color who are being sent out of teachers' classrooms ultimately must return to these classrooms in order to make progress in school. The tensions created as a result of this issue must be addressed. Administrators admitted that they were continuing to search for other interventions to keep students connected and participating in the educational program without expelling and excluding them.

Teacher Focus Group Summary (3 teachers only)

When asked about school climate at Grant and ways that it had changed over the course of the year, teachers attending the focus group stated that they felt that those involved in dealing with discipline the most were doing what was right for students – and that was not a change. Yet, the group also felt that students were experiencing some change in the way discipline was handled. They noted that there was more communication with parents and they expressed increased concern about the need to resolve disciplinary issues in a timely and appropriate manner.

Teachers felt that students in their school to a larger degree were struggling with “life issues” and the behaviors that they brought to school were a reflection of what was happening in their world. They felt that it was important that any adult leading the school's Restorative Justice program have specific qualities and characteristics that were in support of students. The RJ terminology had helped to communicate more clearly with students and their families and as a result more students were being “reached”.

Similar to administrators, teachers were aware that referrals had been cut in half during 2011-2012, and they felt with fewer referrals and more RJ interventions, increased positive results for students and their families were apparent. Teachers felt that when the questions for students focused on what harm was done and how all parties involved could move forward in a positive direction, more positive results were realized.

Teachers expressed concern that they were not aware of having a system in place to track the RJ interventions. They felt that it was important to collect and analyze data regarding

student discipline and outcomes. Improving the school's handling of discipline was of interest to teachers in the school. They felt that student behavior had improved in the last few years, but since problems will always exist in the school setting, how these problems were handled was the critical issue.

Teachers noted that the RJ process allows both sides to be heard in a dispute, and rather than a punitive response students are now more interested and willing to talk about problem-solving. Students were developing an understanding of how their actions affected others – a development that was viewed as powerful. The Restorative Justice process was changing school dynamics so that it was not just the “boss vs. the student” with a resulting battle of wills, but a conversation about how to help students deal with difficult situations. The RJ language was viewed as helping to neutralize behavior incidents and giving teachers the tools to talk about behavior with a focus on the harm that has been done. Students were learning to ask more questions rather than just blaming one another. With traditional discipline, teachers felt there was an emphasis on protocol and policy with specifically identified consequences without much opportunity to talk about an issue. Traditional discipline was not perceived as providing an opportunity for students to learn to face the person who has been harmed and address the issues and related harm.

In relation to RJ principles that teachers felt were effective, they pointed out that students had learned the system quickly. One teacher expressed concern that students sometimes took advantage of the system when there did not appear to be tangible and immediate consequences for their behavior. Most teachers agreed that “pushing students out of school” was counterproductive to their education. They felt that it was critically important to examine disciplinary statistics to determine if problems were truly being resolved in different ways with more positive results.

When probed about their understanding of the principles of RJ, teachers indicated that they had not received any documents to assist them in understanding these concepts. They mentioned that they thought of the program as similar to mediation where each side has the opportunity to be heard. They saw value in the “circling” idea as it brought people together to have a facilitated conversation about difficult issues and differences of opinion. They concurred that this strategy had most likely been in place at the school for awhile and they were uncertain that attaching a RJ label to the process mattered.

A question about fuller implementation of Restorative Justice at Grant and what that might look like was answered with agreement that it would require more than one person to lead the effort. They noted that more dollars would need to be added to the project and more time set aside to better prepare the staff for a fuller implementation of the RJ principles. The timing of training and fuller implementation would need to align with the rest of the school's scheduled priorities.

Teachers mentioned one of the complexities that existed in a large high school setting was that often they came across students misbehaving in the halls they did not know. They cited examples of this occurrence and described how they had worked to resolve these situations in ways that helped students to become better citizens. One teacher mentioned

that her goal was for these students to recognize what they were doing, change their inappropriate behaviors to appropriate, and ultimately become more successful in school.

As to a fuller implementation of RJ at Grant, teachers felt that this would result in a more calming atmosphere in the school. They believed that the school's climate would be supportive and that students would feel valued because their perspectives and opinions would be listened to by the school's authority figures. One teacher cited a past incident in which she was involved with a punitive response to a student's behavior by a security staff member and how long it took for her to rebuild trust with that student following this incident. The need for what teachers describe as a "balanced reaction" to student's inappropriate behavior in their opinion resulted in a superior outcome.

In order for RJ principles to become more fully integrated, sustained, and expanded at Grant, teachers were well aware that this would take additional resources. They knew that more support, dollars, and training would be critical if this program was to survive and grow.

Student Focus Group Summary (schedule and location conflict – only 15 minutes available to conduct focus group session)

Student participants felt that people at Grant generally treated each other well and all participants stated that they had never experienced any bullying at their school. They mentioned a particular hazing incident that occurred at their school during the year, and were pleased that in the end one result of this negative incident was that people came together. They felt that their school was a "community of students", and the hazing incident and the school's response to it exemplified that they were truly one school and this incident did not reflect who they really were.

When asked to discuss what they saw as problematic at their school, they primarily cited their inability to always be able to take the classes that they would like. They also noted that they were perturbed about their large class sizes because they often were not able to get the help that they needed with their studies.

Students felt that the community was disconnected from the school but pointed out that this was not true for their own parents. They clearly identified those adults in the community who were most involved and directly connected to the school and its various programs as ones who had the best understanding of what was actually taking place in the school.

When asked about issues related to race, ethnicity, language and culture, students immediately identified that an achievement gap exists between white and black students. They noted that they felt the school's administrators were working to address this issue – and all of these students agreed that they would like to see all students at Grant doing better.

Interestingly, they pointed out that there appeared to be schools within schools at Grant, and although the school had a very diverse student body, their class make-up did not

reflect this diversity. One student noted that you could go through an entire day of classes without having any students of another race in your classes. Apparently, the hallways oftentimes were the only place in which the school's true diversity was reflected. One of the focus group's black students shared that he was the only black person in his theatre class and he oftentimes felt quite awkward in this setting as a result. Another student pointed out that the same was true of AP and PSU classes at Grant as she was only one of two students of color in these classes.

Students clearly understood that students cannot be forced to take classes that they don't want to take, and they acknowledged that students wanted to take classes with their friends so that they felt more comfortable in the classroom setting. Also when they were with other students that they knew, students were able to get homework help if they were absent and they could study with someone else that they know well.

In terms of the effects of RJ at Grant this year, students felt that it had been somewhat like peer mediation in that those involved in incidents were working to prevent a problem from getting worse. They mentioned that when a student got into trouble they met with the other students who were involved and worked out the problems before more trouble happened. Students felt positive about this process.

Preliminary Considerations for Restorative Justice at Grant High School

- Currently discipline at Grant is less punitive and has shifted to becoming more about problem-solving. This is partially attributed to the Restorative Justice program.
- Relationships among administrators, teachers, students and families have been enhanced by the RJ model, and school staff are working harder to better understand their students and the circumstances in which they live
- The school must deal with their issue of disciplinary equity. Currently black students account for 50-60% of the discipline referrals as students of color are disproportionately being sent out of the classrooms of white teachers.
- Teachers and administrators understand that some of the RJ key principles include an understanding of the concept of "harm", the perpetrator accepting responsibility for the harm, and helping students develop strategies to make amends for the harm that they have done
- Those adults participating in the focus groups agreed that Grant has accepted the RJ program and they have in place the requisite components to be a model program for the city's schools
- Communication has been enhanced by the direct work with families to engage in conversations about how to resolve difficult situations without a punitive response

- The school has recorded fewer disciplinary referrals this year, a trend that is partially attributed to the Restorative Justice model
- All staff participants agreed that more dollars, time, and training are necessary if the school is to become truly immersed in the Restorative Justice model
- Students identified the achievement gap between white and black students as a concern. Further, they noted that there seem to be “schools within schools” at Grant, and although the school has a very diverse student body, class make-up does not reflect this diversity.

5. David Douglas High School – David Douglas School District

David Douglas High School, serving grades 9-12, is currently one of the state’s largest high schools with 3,254 students and is located in the city’s east county area. Established in 1954, the high school is the district’s only high school and the community over the years has resisted breaking it into a smaller high school configuration.

The school has 75% of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunch and 13.4% identified as ESL students. The Oregon Department of Education Student Ethnicity report 2011-2012 for the school indicates the following breakdown: White – 46.5%, Black – 8.4%, Hispanic – 21.8%, Asian/Pacific Islander – 17.7%, American Indian/Alaskan Native – 0.8%, and Multi-Ethnic – 4.7%. The staff is comprised of five administrators, six administrative support directors and/or coordinators, and 176.8 full time equivalent teaching staff.

State performance data for DDHS for combined 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years breaks down as follows: 67.1% of students *meeting, exceeding* or *meeting growth* in reading while 54.9% of students *meet, exceed* or *meet growth* in math. The school’s graduation rate of 61.2% is rated by the state as *In Need of Improvement*, its participation rate is 98.5% and is rated as *Outstanding*, and its AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) status is rated as *Not Met*. The school’s overall school rating by ODE is *In Need of Improvement*.

Restorative Justice resources allocated to David Douglas High School were supported by the city and the county beginning in the spring of 2011. Training for school staff included three staff members (1 freshman assistant principal, 1 attendance coordinator, and 1 counselor) attending four days of Restorative Justice training in spring 2011. Services provided to the high school by the 1/6th time Restorative Justice specialist assigned this year included the following: two meetings with Freshman Academy teachers to discuss basic RJ principles and practices, development of a holiday newsletter for freshman academy students about improving time spent at home over the holidays, a two-day training for freshman selected to be members of the RJ student team, weekly after school meetings with the RJ student team to develop skills, technical support for administrators dealing with discipline situations, and meeting regularly with administrators to discuss RJ at DDHS.

Focus groups at David Douglas High School included the following participants:

- Administrators – 4
- Teachers – 4
- Students – 8

Administrator Focus Group Summary

When asked about changes in the school climate at DDHS this year, administrators spoke at length about the possibilities for Restorative Justice to be expanded at the school and further embedded into the school's program next year. They indicated that they would like teachers to begin to implement these principles into their academy classrooms with students actually running the "circles". This emphasis on the school's academy structure would allow for student's school-based problems to be dealt with earlier in their high school career resulting in better preparation for their future high school years. Administrators have already discussed the possibility of providing additional training for their academy teachers this August.

Administrators expressed appreciation that this year when school disciplinary situations arose, they had access to the resources provided by the RJ Specialist and the direct assistance that she was able to provide. Academy teachers, who taught part time in the academies in addition to their other classes, reported that the climate in the academies was better than anywhere else in the school (partially attributable to the RJ program). Behavior was better overall and the attendance rate was higher. Although a number of factors were identified as contributing to this result, the RJ program was identified as a primary contributor.

Strategies were developed for implementation of RJ principles into the academy structure, and one of particular importance was the use of "student circles" to discuss issues students anticipated they would face over the holidays. This discussion led to development of a letter that was sent home to parents some of whom responded positively about this effort to school officials.

Another probe was about how DDHS might improve its handling of discipline next year. The administrative group discussed their decision to focus on their freshman both academically and behaviorally in order to achieve better results with students in grades 10, 11 and 12. In addition, since the structure for the 10th grade year includes support for students who continue to struggle academically and behaviorally, the goal would be for students to have the tools to solve their own problems by teaching problem-solving strategies to them early on in their high school experience.

One area of continued focus for the administrators was working with staff to increase student engagement during classroom instruction. Their hope was that if students were more engaged in learning, they would be less likely to misbehave in the classroom setting.

Administrators felt that when student discipline was focused on punitive responses to misbehavior the result was an ineffective and negative impact on student opportunities to

learn. On the other hand, one of the identified RJ principles viewed as particularly effective is the emphasis on helping students understand the impact of their behaviors on their community as well as their overall opportunity to pursue their education.

Administrators identified that students had inadequate problem-solving skills and RJ provided them with the opportunity to have more control over their behavior by providing them with better problem-solving strategies. RJ was also perceived as helping students to better understand that they are a part of the “here and now”, that their behavior had a ripple effect, and that they needed to look others in the eye to see how they felt - key components of the RJ philosophy.

Another question targeted toward probing what administrators understood well about the Restorative Justice model elicited comments about the need for program accountability. Questions were posed about how they might know that this was working in a school of their size and what plans were in place to monitor its effectiveness along the way. Also, administrators were highly interested in the program’s potential longevity, the expected level of on-going financial support for this work, and whether or not they could expect RJ to have long-term impact on the school’s program.

Lastly, when probed about program sustainability in a large comprehensive high school, administrators felt strongly that it must be embedded into a part of the school’s structure where it makes the best sense and has the potential to have the most significant long-term impact. They viewed academies as the natural place for this to occur. But, they also felt strongly that any outside organization that is working in their school must understand their school’s culture and evolve in a way that is in keeping with their priorities. This included developing an understanding of the DDHS community and its issues, and any outside program must be able to shape their efforts in response to the school’s needs.

Administrators pointed out that any additional program that was introduced must not take away from the “existing energy in the school as they have no free time and cannot handle any more external programs”. In so doing, the program would have sustainability by “not adding anything else to our plates.” Also the program must directly impact the behaviors of students described as “repeat offenders” who continually created problems in the school setting. It must help to resolve issues with those students and to make a difference with their parents too.

They felt very strongly that when they work with an outside agency in the school setting, the agency and its priorities must fit into their system. A win-win situation was possible only when “they are working with us and for us”. When the outside agency complemented the existing school program, what they described as the first level of sustainability was achieved.

Teacher Focus Group Summary (one assistant principal sits in on the discussion)

Teachers responded to a prompt about school climate and change this year by stating that they felt it was about the same as it had been in the past. They described feeling overwhelmed, over-worked and out-numbered as a result of budgetary reductions of staff.

They stated their belief that in the hallways sometimes students exhibited defiance because they knew that the teachers are out-numbered. They felt discouraged by this reality.

Also, they noted that the economic downturn had impacted the student population and the level of poverty in the school was far more dramatic than in the past. Students seemed to be more needy and more desperate, and there were fewer strategies available to the teachers to help them deal effectively with these needs. Although DDHS is located outside of the city limits, they described it as having an inner city feeling; in particular, the students seemed to come to them with more challenges. Teachers also indicated that because their high school was so large, and the teaching staff was large, students sometimes got mixed messages when adults had differing rules for various situations.

In relation to the effect of the RJ program on the school, focus group teachers felt they had only been partially involved during the year. They were aware of certain aspects of the program that were in place such as, students participating in the training, getting into groups/circles to problem-solve, and the holiday season letter to families. They felt conflicted by the fact that they had a primary obligation to ensure that students learned their core academic content and expressed concern that they were asked to give time to an outside program.

When asked about the principles of RJ that they viewed as effective, they identified empowering students to help other students, addressing attendance issues, and monitoring students more closely as important components of the program. They expressed strongly that students taking responsibility for their actions and having to accept responsibility to make things right would contribute to overall student behavioral improvement.

In order for the Restorative Justice program to become sustainable at DDHS, teachers expressed that they do not yet fully understand how it would fit into the existing program. They acknowledged that they needed more time and training to better understand the program and its philosophy, and given additional information and training, they could be more supportive.

Student Focus Group Summary

Students were asked what they liked or disliked at their school this year about how people treated each other, and they responded that they felt that their school was a friendly place. They described their school as a big place with enough students that anyone could find a friend-group. Friends with common areas of interest was apparently one of the ways they identified with other students, and they pointed out that there was enough diversity and enough different cultures that they could easily find new friends. They described this as an “excellent” feature of their school.

This was followed by a discussion about bullying in the school setting which apparently exists at DDHS. Students did not feel that bullying was actively addressed by school staff unless someone reported it and then administrators came up with a consequence. But, they did not feel that the consequences really changed the behavior. Students’ concerns

appeared to be that people did not seem to understand what the other person was going through and they lacked an understanding of their background.

Students were asked to discuss what they felt was frustrating or problematic at school during the year. They expressed empathy for students who were picked on by others because of how they looked or how they were behaving. Their concern was that the school's adults didn't seem to respond and sometimes acted like they didn't care about this situation.

Also, they were concerned that sometimes students disrespected their teachers and they might get sent to the hall or security would be called to deal with the situation, but nothing changed in terms of the student's behavior – they described this as a “repeating cycle”. Their primary concern was that the administration didn't seem to have a way to deal with these negative behaviors and they gave a consequence but did not address changing the student's behavior.

When probed to describe the relationships between school staff and parents some focus group members had varied perspectives on this issue. Some said their parents were very involved with the school and tracking their school performance while others stated that there was no connection between the families and the school. These responses seemed to be directly tied to individual students and their families and were not generalized across the group.

The issue of race ethnicity, and culture was the next area of discussion. Students seemed to express that they did not perceive that this was a major issue at DDHS. They said that their school was big and “we hang around with our friends or someone like us”. Race and ethnicity were not described as being a significant issue at the school and students said that when someone did make an inappropriate remark, it was primarily to get a laugh.

When a conflict arose between school staff and a student, adults were described as reacting by calling security and the student being removed from the class. Their concern about this was that in the end this student then missed the opportunity to learn.

Class size was also noted as a concern by this focus group. They acknowledged that these large class sizes created difficulty for teachers and in the end their only recourse to student misbehavior appeared to be to call for security help.

The final prompt for the student focus group was to describe how they might change the way discipline was handled in their school. They felt strongly that people needed to have the opportunity to sit down and talk about issues, and through increased communication problems could be resolved more effectively. Their suggestion was that staff should talk to students, talk about what their weaknesses are, and why they kept causing trouble without jumping immediately to a disciplinary response. Through these types of conversations and with increased communication between teachers and students, there would be a better chance that the teacher would learn the reason behind why the student was acting out. By sending the student out into the hall or to the office nothing was accomplished – students felt strongly that this system needed to be changed. They concluded this session by clearly

stating that staff needed to change how students were treated and show they care and are worried about them. By teachers showing students that they care, the overall behavior of disruptive students would be improved.

Preliminary Considerations for Restorative Justice at David Douglas High School

- Teachers and administrators agree that the climate in the academies is better than elsewhere in the school and this is partially attributable to the RJ work underway
- By targeting RJ resources for the 9th grade academy program, the expectation is that academic and behavioral performance will be improved as students progress through their 10th, 11th and 12th grade years at David Douglas High School
- All focus groups concur that students need better problem-solving skills and strategies in order to become more productive and successful in the school setting
- In order for the RJ program to be sustainable at DDHS, administrators feel that it must be embedded into the school's existing structure where it has potential to have the greatest long-term impact. Administrative staff indicate that the school's ninth and tenth grade academy program provides the best alignment with the RJ program.
- Teachers express concern about the impact that staffing budgetary reductions have had on their class sizes as well as on the overall size of the school
- The economic downturn has resulted in increased levels of poverty in the community and more difficult home situations for students which is impacting behavior at school
- Students taking responsibility for their actions is perceived as contributing to overall student behavioral improvement
- Students do not express concerns about racial issues nor do they express concerns about issues related to student ethnicity. They feel that their school is big enough that anyone is able to find a "friend group"
- Students identify bullying and student disrespect directed toward teachers as being issues that are not adequately addressed at the school. They feel that increased communication between teachers and students will help to address these problems.

IV. Considerations and Key Findings

In this study of the Restorative Justice program in five Multnomah County schools, there are some findings that will be important to consider as adjustments and modifications are made to the program in the ensuing years. Decisions about next steps should be informed by what has been gleaned from this examination as well as from other “on the ground” indicators. This report’s reliance on qualitative research and data should be carefully reviewed and considered along with other available quantitative data that enhance this evaluation process (e.g. suspension and expulsion data, office referral data, attendance data). Also as resources are available to continue with evaluation of the program, it will be useful to more broadly survey a wider group of constituents to add to this sampling of current program participants. In schools that have been engaged in the RJ work for a longer time, it will be of use to understand its impact on families (parents in particular) as well as the broader community.

Preliminary Findings: (not in priority order)

- In schools that have had longer term opportunities to incorporate Restorative Justice principles and practices, the program is more firmly embedded into the school’s overall structure
- Where there is full-time Restorative Justice staff in place, the program is having a more significant impact on student attitudes and consequently their behaviors
- Administrative staff must more fully understand the program’s philosophy, principles and potential results, and must commit to its implementation in order for it to be integrated in a broader way into the school’s disciplinary options
- School staffing resources continue to be a critical challenge and Restorative Justice staffing should not be used to supplant district staffing resources directed toward the school’s overall educational program
- Relationships and communication between school staff and families are significantly enhanced through the use of restorative principles to respond to disciplinary issues
- Time must be allocated in support of the Restorative Justice program for successful implementation. This time should be directed toward administrative and teacher professional development, enhancement of student and parent understanding, development of community understanding, and support for systemic implementation of the program’s principles and practices. All are critical to building the requisite foundation for program success.
- School climate will be impacted positively through careful implementation of restorative principles in lieu of punitive responses to student misbehavior

- Problem –solving skills learned by students through the Restorative Justice program will contribute in numerous ways to all aspects of their lives both now and in the future
- Discipline models that rely solely on a punitive system of suspensions and expulsions will not in the long-term promote building positive relationships with students and their families
- School staff (administrators and teachers) must clearly understand the program’s purpose for successful implementation and systemic change
- By allowing students to have a more active voice in school-based situations and decisions, issues of authority and control will need to be actively addressed by both administrators and teachers
- Some of the assumptions made by adults about students in these schools need to be studied, clarified and actively addressed in order for the program to be successful (e.g. “teenagers are selfish”, students who appear to be gang-involved must be removed from school, students of color are more frequently removed from the classrooms of white teachers)
- Disciplinary equity must continue to be examined and responses developed when appropriate as the Restorative Justice program is implemented
- In order for the Restorative Justice program to have long-term viability in a school, it must become embedded systemically and pervasively into the attitudes, systems and structures in place across the school

V. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the study of the effectiveness of the Restorative Justice program currently implemented in five Portland area K-12 public schools. The evaluation was conducted in five of the eight schools currently participating in the Restorative Justice project. Included in this study are one elementary school, two middle schools and two high schools, and these schools represent three school districts. These schools include the following: Rigler Elementary School (Portland Public School District), Parkrose Middle School (Parkrose School District), Floyd Light Middle School (David Douglas School District), Grant High School (Portland Public School District), and David Douglas High School (David Douglas School District).

The Restorative Justice alternative discipline model is primarily focused on reducing the number of student exclusions from school and decreasing student involvement with the police and the juvenile justice system. Key principles of the program include an emphasis on healing over punishment, inclusion not exclusion, and individual accountability. Community involvement and support for the program are critical to accomplishment of its overall objectives.

Given that research indicates that students who have been excluded from school are at greater risk of being referred to the juvenile justice system, and students of color are disproportionately suspended or expelled from schools, the Restorative Justice model seeks to break this cycle by offering alternative disciplinary strategies that hold youth accountable for their behavior while maintaining their connection to and support from the school community. (See page 2 of the full report for research citations)

This qualitative study of the program relies primarily on the collection of focus group data from each school's administrators, selected teachers, and selected students. This research was designed to capture the attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of those most directly affected by the Restorative Justice program currently in place in the five schools. It is important to note that the opinions obtained through focus group research do not necessarily reflect and represent the opinions of all students or of all staff involved in the Restorative Justice project. This research strategy presents findings that represent opinions expressed with sufficient frequency to warrant consideration and possibly further study.

Summary of Findings

- In schools that have had longer-term opportunities to incorporate Restorative Justice principles and practices, the program is more firmly embedded into the school's overall structure. Additionally, these schools typically have the additional resource of a full-time Restorative Justice specialist. This RJ trained individual has in all instances had a significant impact on student attitudes and consequently on their behaviors.

Administrators and administrative support staff in these schools appear to have a deeper understanding of the program's philosophy, principles and potential results

and are committed to integrating RJ options into the school's disciplinary responses. Key to this level of implementation are the following: length of time participating, resource allocation, and level of staff understanding.

- Relationships and communication between school staff and families are significantly enhanced through the use of restorative principles to respond to disciplinary issues.*

Discipline models that rely solely on a punitive system of suspensions and expulsions do not in the long-term promote building positive relationships with students and their families.

- School climate is positively impacted through implementation of restorative principles that are used in lieu of punitive responses. RJ interventions that focus on recognition of the harm that has been done, the impact of one's actions on others, and the development of empathy for others all contribute to student growth and development. These lessons combine with the development of problem-solving skills to contribute in numerous ways to all aspects of student's lives both now and in the future.
- The allocation of time for Restorative Justice program implementation is critical to successful implementation. This time must be directed toward administrator and teacher professional development in RJ, enhancing student and parent understanding of RJ and its purpose and principles, developing community understanding, and building community support for the program.

It is clear that all adults working in the school must clearly understand the program's purpose for successful implementation that results in systemic change.

- By allowing students more active voice in problem-solving situations, one result is that the authority structure currently in place in the school setting will be impacted. The participatory nature of the restorative process for students needs to be understood and accepted by school staff.
- Issues related to equity and discipline must be carefully studied and appropriate responses developed. Assumptions contributing to this must be studied, clarified and appropriately addressed (See page 34 of the full report for elaboration).
- School staffing resources are a continual challenge for schools and districts, and Restorative Justice staffing should not supplant staffing for the school's educational program.
- In order for the Restorative Justice program to have long-term viability in a school, it must be embedded systemically and pervasively into the attitudes, systems and structures in place across the school. It also must involve the school's community in the program to ensure long-term success.

This study of the Restorative Justice program in these five schools shows that given the appropriate resources, the program holds promise as an alternative disciplinary model. With the intent of reducing suspensions and expulsions, RJ provides a seemingly fair and reasonably effective disciplinary alternative. Given that educators come to their work with the objective of keeping students in school and contributing to their educational success, an alternative to exclusion from schools is imperative. The lessons that students learn as a result of participation in the restorative justice process will contribute to their overall growth and development as successful citizens now and in the future.

** Note: The opportunity for schools to participate in the parent/teacher restorative listening dialogue was made possible through the partnership between RNW and the Portland Parent Union. The Portland Parent Union is a parent advocacy organization whose goal is to give parents an equal voice in their children's education and to empower them to be powerful advocates for their children and each other.*

VI. Appendix

Restorative Justice Evaluation Focus Group Questions

Rigler Middle School

Administrators

1. As a result of the Restorative Justice (RJ) program, talk about the ways (if any) that you think the school climate at Rigler has changed this year. What effect has the RJ program had on your school so far?
2. What are some principles of RJ that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?

Teachers

1. In what ways (if any) do you think that the school climate at Rigler has changed this year?
2. What effect has the RJ program had on your school so far?
3. What are some of the RJ principles that you have concerns about?

Students

1. Talk about the way people treat each other in your school.
2. What is Restorative Justice?
3. How do you feel about the way people treat each other (teacher/students)?

Parkrose Middle School

Administrators

1. What effect has the Restorative Justice program had on your school so far?
2. In what ways (if any) do you think the school climate has changed this year?
3. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline?
4. What are some principles of RJ that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?
5. What would need to happen for RJ principles to become an integrated part of how teachers, students, and administrators approach discipline?

Teachers

1. What effect has the Restorative Justice program had on your school so far?

2. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline overall?
3. What are some principles of RJ that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?
4. Describe opportunities that you have had to use RJ and how that went – what did you learn?
5. What would need to happen for RJ principles to become an integrated part of how teachers, students, and administrators approach discipline?

Students – Group #1

1. What have you liked about your school this year – in particular the way people treat each other?
2. What do you think the effects of Restorative Justice have been?
3. What would you say about the relationships between school, staff, parents and the community?
4. What issues would you raise about race, ethnicity, language, or culture? Are all students treated the same – or are there differences based on race, ethnicity, language, or culture?
5. Do you think that it would be helpful if kids got more involved?
6. If you could change anything about how discipline is handled at your school, what would it be?
7. Has the RJ program worked?

Students – Group #2

1. What have you liked about your school this year – in particular the way people treat each other?
2. When a conflict arises between school staff and a student, how do the adults react?
3. What would you say about the relationship between school staff, parents, and the community?
4. What issues would you raise about race, ethnicity, language, or culture? Are all students treated the same – or are there differences based on race, ethnicity, language, or culture?
5. If you could change anything about how discipline is handled at your school, what would it be?
6. What do you think the effect(s) of RJ at your school have been so far?

Floyd Light Middle School

Administrators

1. In what ways (if any) do you think that the school climate at Floyd Light has changed this year? In particular as a result of Restorative Justice?
2. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline?
3. What are some principles of RJ that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?
4. If/as RJ becomes more fully implemented at your school, what do you imagine the result might be?
5. What resources would you need for expansion and sustainability of the RJ program?

Teachers

1. In what ways do you think that the school climate has changed this year?
2. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline?
3. What do you know about Restorative Justice?
4. If you could imagine RJ being more fully implemented in your school, what do you think the results might be?
5. Do you have anything in place currently for kids to be involved in solving their own problems? Is this an aspiration of yours?

Students

1. What have you liked about your school this year – in particular about the way people treat each other?
2. What would you say about the relationships between school staff, parents, and the community?
3. What do you know about RJ and how has it been helpful to you this year?
4. What would make this school a better place for kids?

Grant High School

Administrators

1. In what ways (if any) do you think that the school climate has changed this year?
2. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline?
3. What are some principles of Restorative Justice that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?
4. What are the RJ principles that you understand well and/or those that you may have questions about?
5. How can this RJ work be sustained over time?

Teachers

1. In what ways do you think that the school climate has changed this year?
2. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline?
3. What are some of the principles of Restorative Justice that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?
4. What are the RJ principles that you understand well and/or those that you may have questions about?
5. If RJ becomes more fully implemented in your school, what do you imagine the result might be?
6. What would need to happen for RJ principles to become more integrated, sustained, and/or expanded at Grant?

Students

1. What have you liked about your school this year – in particular about the way people treat each other?
2. What have you found frustrating or problematic?
3. What would you say about the relationships between school staff, parents, and the community?
4. What issues would you raise about race, ethnicity, language or culture?
5. What do you think the effect(s) of Restorative Justice have been this year?

David Douglas High School

Administrators

1. In what ways do you think that the school climate at DDHS has changed this year?
2. What are your hopes for how your school might improve its handling of discipline for next year?
3. What are the Restorative Justice principles that you understand well and/or those that you may have questions about?
4. How do you make RJ sustainable in a large comprehensive high school such as yours?

Teachers

1. In what ways (if any) do you think that the school climate has changed this year?
2. What effect has the Restorative Justice program had on your school so far?
3. What are some of the principles of Restorative Justice that you feel are effective? What RJ principles do you have concerns about?
4. What (if any) changes have you observed in students as a result of RJ?
5. What would need to happen for RJ principles to be sustained?

Students

1. What have you liked or disliked at your school this year in terms of the way people treat each other?
2. What have you found frustrating or problematic?
3. What would you say about the relationships between the school staff and parents (and/or the community)?
4. What issues would you raise about race, ethnicity, language or culture?
5. When a conflict arises between school staff and a student, how do the adults react?
6. If you could change anything about how discipline has been handled here, what would it be?