Discipline that Restores:
An examination of restorative justice in the school setting

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Introduction to Discipline that Restores

- Context
  - Purpose
  - Journey

- Background
  - Restorative practices
  - Restorative justice
  - School bonding
  - School engagement

Problem statement

Students that have bonded with and engaged in school are easily identified:

- Rarely miss school
- Routinely complete homework
- Usually follow school and classroom rules
- Sometimes participate in an after-school activity
- Appear to have a healthy level of social engagement
- If questioned, would generally tell you they like school

(Oelsner, Lippold & Greenberg, 2011)

Problem statement

Just as students who are disengaged are easily identifiable:

- Routinely miss school
- Routinely do not complete homework
- Look for ways to skirt school and classroom rules
- Rarely participate in an after-school activity (unless forced, as punishment)
- Appear to have a poor level of social engagement
- If questioned, may tell you they dislike school

    (Oelsner, Lippold & Greenberg, 2011)

- These are the students, often the same handful, to whom I wrote my more than 30 discipline referrals

Problem statement

Indicators of student disengagement:
- Attended 80% or less of school
- Failed math
- Failed English
- Received an out of school suspension
- Received an unsatisfactory behavior mark in any subject on the final report card (Balfanz, Herzog & Mac Iver, 2007)

How do we reach these "disengaged" students?

Problem statement

One behavior management model that is experiencing success, through documented research, is the restorative justice process.

Discipline that Restores, understudied in most school settings, is one such restorative justice model.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the current study was to investigate restorative practices, with Discipline that Restores practices as a baseline foundation, in economically disadvantaged classrooms in west coast public school settings to better understand their effects on grade point average, discipline referrals, faculty attitudes, and school climate.

The schools studied included grades: a) transitional kindergarten (TK) – sixth grade, b) kindergarten – eighth grade, and c) ninth – 12th grade.

Literature review

- Poor school bonding results in problem behaviors, including delinquency, violence, and drug use (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, et al., 1997; Henry, Thornberry, & Huizinga, 2009).

- Many teachers address disruptive classroom episodes with punitive, rather than proactive relationship-building, measures (Pace, Boykins, & Davis, 2014).

- Teachers report the desire to implement instructional practices, classroom management techniques, and rapport building that mutually reinforces each other, but lack necessary training (Kennedy, 2011).

Literature review

- School-wide behavior intervention programs have a statistically significant positive effect on student attendance, and attendance is a proximal and statistically significant indicator of drop-out risk (Freeman, Simonsen, McCoach, Sugai, Lombardi, & Horner, 2015).

- Disciplinary treatment programs in prisons, schools, and community can reduce re-offenses by as much as 10%, with much larger effects for well-designed and effectively implemented programs (Butts & Mears, 2001).

- Restorative processes place both victims and offenders in roles that encourage active, interpersonal, and collaborative problem solving to repair damaged relationships (Choi, Green, & Gilbert, 2011).

- The Discipline that Restores program has been used successfully in urban school settings on the west coast, but is understudied in most traditional school settings (Claassen & Claassen, 2008).

Research question one

What effects did implementing Discipline that Restores have on student grade point average in one west coast school?

Research question two

What effects did implementing Discipline that Restores have on the number of discipline referrals in one west coast school?

Research question three

What effects did implementing Discipline that Restores have on school climate in three west coast schools?

Research question four

What are staff attitudes toward Discipline that Restores in three west coast schools?

Research design

In order to complete a thorough analysis of the research topic, seeking explanations and predictions that will generalize to other schools, the researcher chose a quantitative research study.

The researcher used quantitative survey instruments to determine staff attitudes toward discipline in the classroom and in the school at-large, as well as attitudes about school climate.

Grade point averages and number of discipline referrals were analyzed quantitatively to determine trends before and after implementation of DTR.

Additionally, features of a multiple baseline design were implemented for this research.

Research design

Strengths of the study include:

- a relatively large sample size of more than 80 student GPAs
- concrete evidence of reduction in discipline referrals post-DTR implementation

Limitations include:

- having only one school from which to extract GPA data
- not having enough representation for respective grade levels.

Data collection

- Adapted version of the Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) Satisfaction Survey
  - Replaced PBIS with DTR
  - 5-point Likert scale questions
    - 5 indicated 'strongly agree'
    - 1 indicated 'strongly disagree'
  - Online survey commencing August 30, 2016, completed March 2, 2017

- 2014 and 2016 California School Climate Survey
  - Obtained from the Cal-School Climate, Health & Learning Survey Regional Center
  - Evaluated changes in school climate at Grandel High School

- Number and type of discipline referrals per student

Participants

Points of data for the study were collected from three west coast schools.

- Grandel High School
  - Rural high-school of grades 9–12.
  - 433 students pre-DTR implementation, 432 one year postimplementation, 465 two years postimplementation.
  - Minority enrollment approximately 95%, 100% economically disadvantaged.

- Fulton School
  - suburban public school of grades K-8
  - 199 students pre-DTR implementation, 249 one year postimplementation, and 301 two years postimplementation.
  - Minority enrollment approximately 71%, 69% economically disadvantaged

- Thomas Charter Academy
  - inner-city charter school of TK-sixth grade.
  - 662 students pre-DTR implementation, 589 one year postimplementation, 516 two years postimplementation.
  - Minority enrollment approximately 84%, 92% economically disadvantaged.

Analytical methods

- The researcher chose quantitative survey instruments to determine staff attitudes toward discipline in the classroom and in the school at large, as well as attitudes about school climate. Data from these instruments were descriptively analyzed.

- Grade point averages and number of discipline referrals were analyzed quantitatively to determine trends before and after implementation of DTR from one high school, one K–8 public school, and one TK–6 charter school.

- Due to the schools recording GPA differently, (i.e. on a 1–5 scale versus traditional 0–4.00 scale), or incomplete referral data, GPA data and behavior referral data could only be collected from one school: Grandel High School. Additionally, one school has utilized DTR from the inception of their school, so pre-DTR and post-DTR data was not attainable.

- The grade point average and behavior referral data was collected from one west coast school, and the school climate and staff attitude data for the study was collected from three west coast schools.

Findings and conclusions

RQ1) What effects did implementing Discipline that Restores have on student grade point average in one west coast school?

- *t*-test comparing time-1 to time-2
  - *3.02 GPA*
  - *2.93 GPA*
  - *2.94 GPA*

- Degrees of freedom, Pearson Correlation, and p-value
  - Time-1
    - 79 , 0.921, 0.005
  - Time-2
    - 79 , 0.884, 0.023

- Statistical significance
  - Not increased, but decreased GPA

Findings and conclusions

RQ2) What effects did implementing Discipline that Restores have on the number of discipline referrals in one west coast school?

- Though the findings from time-1 and time-2 did not show an increase in overall GPA after DTR had been implemented at Grandel High School, there was an increase in GPA for students who received office referrals the year before DTR was implemented.

Student	10th grade GPA	11th grade GPA	12th grade GPA
1	1.59	2.11	2.30
2	1.88	1.85	2.09
3	1.94	1.66	1.63
4	3.13	3.29	3.35
5	3.06	3.28	3.48
6	1.77	1.84	Moved schools
7	2.47	2.50	Graduated
8	1.98	2.23	Graduated
9	2.44	2.72	Graduated
10	2.92	3.00	Graduated

Findings and conclusions

RQ3) What effects did implementing Discipline that Restores have on school climate in three west coast schools?

- Descriptive analysis was rendered most effective for the DTR Satisfaction Survey.

- Overall, teachers felt that DTR had a positive effect on school climate, reporting that the implementation of DTR has resulted in a decrease in discipline referrals, greater respect by students for other students, and increased autonomy in student choice.

Findings and conclusions

RQ4) What are staff attitudes toward Discipline that Restores in three west coast schools?

- On a Likert Scale of 1 to 5, teachers reported an overall mean of 4 in their support of DTR implementation in their school.

- An overall mean of 4 was reported in:
  – satisfaction of DTR expectations (in the classroom, hallway, cafeteria, and restroom)
  – satisfaction in DTR consequences (four options model, contracts, mediation)
  – satisfaction in ease of documentation (contracts, referrals, and mediation notes)
  – satisfaction in administrative support for DTR

- However, teachers reported a mean score of 2 in:
  – feeling like they were regularly communicated to regarding updates to processes and procedures with DTR
  – consistently teaching DTR expectations and consequences

Implications and Recommendations

- As demand increases for administrators to seek ways to separate current discipline practices from zero-tolerance policies, decision makers are looking for positive ways to improve discipline practices and school climates. The information gleaned from this research could be used as evidence for change. Based on DTR survey results, schools implementing DTR could recognize positive impacts in student behavior, student respect, number of discipline referrals written, and student autonomy.

- Future research would benefit from surveying schools across the country that have implemented DTR; studying schools with varied socioeconomic demographics; studying how schools decide to implement DTR as a means to address disciplinary issues; the effect of DTR on student-teacher relationships

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