Evaluation of the Use of Restorative Practices to Reduce School Truancy and Suspensions

Prepared by

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Executive Summary

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Prepared by: The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University
Prepared for: State Court Administrative Office, Michigan Supreme Court

Program Overview

The Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office, as part of a pilot project, provides grant funding to support the provision of restorative practices (RP) in schools as part of the Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP). The school-based RP model is used to address disciplinary issues and increase the amount of time students spend in the classroom through reduced truancy and suspensions. The long-term hope of the program is that it will help prevent youth from becoming involved with the criminal justice system. The CDRP funds mediation centers that develop a model of RP services and provide the necessary expertise and staff to implement RP services in schools. The centers provide each school with a full- or part-time staff member who works directly with students and school staff to conduct on-site conferences or circles for individuals who are referred to the program. Through RP services, participants learn how to resolve the conflict and work together to create a written agreement indicating how the situation will be resolved and avoided in the future.

Study Purposes and Methods

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of RP on high school student truancy and suspensions. Other purposes include assessing stakeholder satisfaction, service use, and implementation. The impact of RP services was examined through the comparison of attendance and disciplinary outcome measures between students at a school with established RP programs and a statistically-matched group of students drawn from a school that began RP programming partway through the study. Students' experiences with RP were assessed through a participant questionnaire. A parent survey was also conducted but did not generate enough responses to be included in this report. Use and program-reported outcomes were assessed through an analysis of data from the state case management system for RP services. Implementation was assessed though school site visits (including teacher and staff focus groups) and interviews with CDRP center staff, as well as a literature review that examined research on RP effectiveness. The results presented here were derived from data collected at two urban schools served by the same CDRP center.

Results

Impact

RP had a positive impact on disciplinary outcomes and attendance in the study.

RP was associated with a reduction in suspension days, absent days, and tardy periods.

0.24 fewer days of suspension per student school-wide (Year 1 average), the equivalent of approximately 340 fewer total suspension-days at the school

2.4 fewer days of absences per student (Year 1 average), the equivalent of approximately 3,400 fewer total missed days at the school

16 fewer reported tardy periods per student (Year 1 average), the equivalent of approximately 22,720 fewer instances of students being tardy to class

Out-of-school (OSS) suspensions were the most common disciplinary consequence avoided through RP.
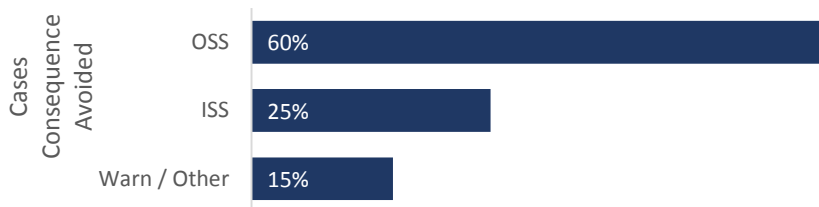
Figure E-1. Discipline Avoided by Type and Percent of Incidents, 2016–2018

RP services were used to avoid 628 instances of formal disciplinary action over the two-year period. In other, less frequent cases, a student who participated in RP faced the same penalty but for a shorter duration. For example, in 22 instances, out-of-school suspension was not avoided entirely, but rather the number of days of OSS suspension was reduced by 1–2 days.

Most agreements (9 out of 10) created during RP were being upheld.

Figure E-2. Status of RP Agreements at Follow-Up

The most frequently upheld agreements were related to physical fights. Agreements formed during RP services that were related to truancy or incidents of taunting and harassment were the least likely to be upheld.

Reaction

Students reported having a positive experience with RP services.

+90% of students felt they were treated fairly, had a chance to express themselves, and were satisfied with the agreement generated during RP.
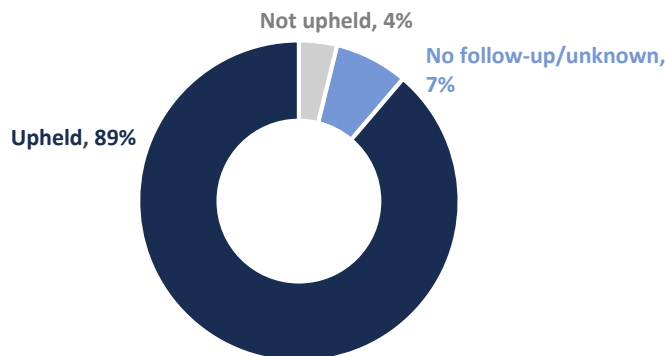
92% of students said they would use RP services again.

83% of students reported that there was no reoccurrence of conflict during the follow-up period and that they were on better terms with the other party.

Reach

RP was used most frequently with younger students.

Grade

9th 56%
10th 24%
11th 10%
12th 10%

Figure E-3. Portion of Students Using RP by Grade

RP referrals and use were most common among younger students in lower high-school grades. Over half of all students involved in RP cases were high school freshmen.

Black and multiracial students were overrepresented in RP referrals.

Multiracial 1.56
Black 1.39
White 0.89
Hispanic 0.33

-    0.50   1.00   1.50   2.00
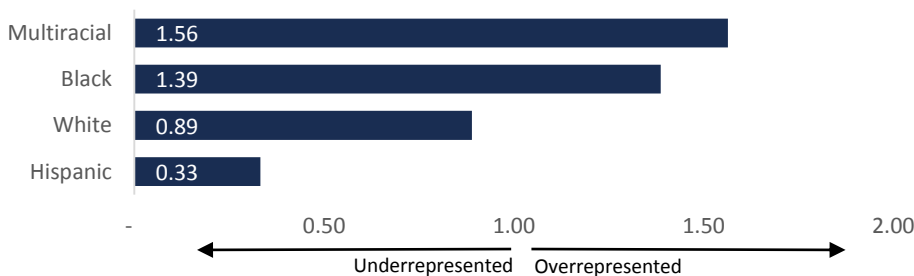
← Underrepresented   Overrepresented →

Figure E-4. Ratio of RP Users to School Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Categories

The ratio of RP users to the school population by demographic group shows that Black or African American and multiracial students receive a disproportionate number of RP referrals. It should also be noted that Hispanic students receive disproportionately fewer referrals to RP services, compared to the groups portion of the total student population. A 1:1 ratio would indicate that the portion of students in a race or ethnic category who were referred to RP was the same as the overall proportion of students in this race or ethnic group at the school. Ratios significantly above one indicate overrepresentation, while numbers significantly below one indicate underrepresentation. The disparity may reflect the widely observed historical finding that African American and other non-White students are more likely to be suspended or face other disciplinary measures.[1]

Female students receive the majority of RP referrals (68%).

RP was most commonly used for incidents of fighting, verbal arguments, and gossip.
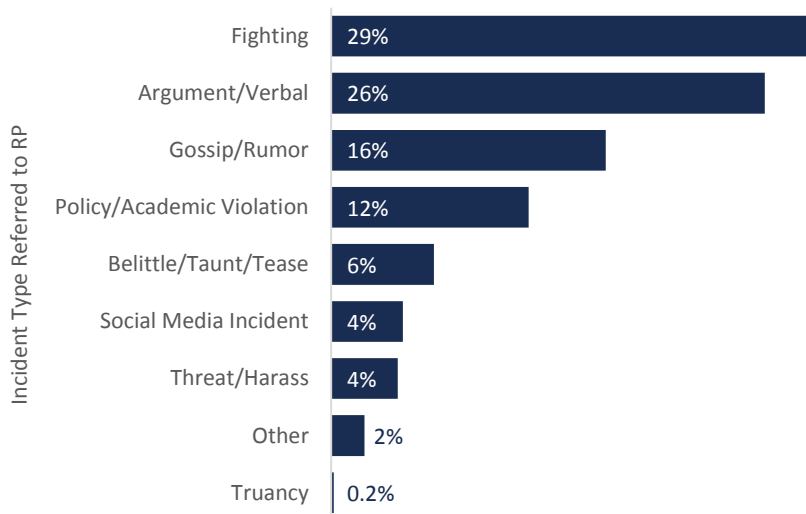
Figure E-5. Primary Incident Type for RP Referrals

The most common types of incidents that resulted in RP referrals were fights and verbal arguments. RP was used less often for incidents that primarily involved truancy, threats and harassment, or social media. Although social media was not often indicated as the primary cause of a disciplinary incident, discussions with school staff and teachers indicate that social media is often a contributing factor that fuels other situations, such as fights, arguments, and gossip.

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[1] Skiba, R., Michael, R., Nardo, A., & Paterson, R. (2002). *The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment.* Retrieved from www.indiana.edu/~equity/docs/ColorofDiscipline2002.pdf; US Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection. (2014). *Dear colleague letter on the nondiscriminatory administration of school discipline.* Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html

Implementation

The participating center used established approaches (circles, conferences) to provide RP services at their associated schools.

Our review of existing literature finds established support for the RP practices implemented at the schools in this study: circles and conferences. The literature shows impacts across a variety of settings and outcomes (Appendix A).

Introduction

The Evaluation Center conducted process and outcome evaluations of the restorative practices (RP) supported in Michigan schools by the Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP) for the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office (SCAO).

Program Summary

The SCAO provides grant funding to support the provision of restorative practices (RP) as part of the CDRP. The original focus of the legislation that created the CDRP was to promote the use of mediation and other RP as an alternative to court for resolving some dispute cases. Services were provided to willing participants at no cost through a CDRP center—a nonprofit organization using mediators and other staff experienced with RP—with the goal of reducing court caseloads and achieving better outcomes.

More recently, the program was expanded in a pilot project to provide support for RP in schools. Under the school-based model, RP is used to address disciplinary issues and reduce the use of punishments that exclude youth from the classroom. The SCAO's stated goal[2] for RP in schools is to reduce truancy and suspension, while hopefully preventing youth from becoming involved with the criminal justice system in the long run.

In the public-school setting, SCAO provides select grant funding to support services in some schools, while responsibility for the direct provision of services ultimately lies with the CDRP centers and partner schools. The CDRP centers develop and operate their own model of RP services, and they provide the necessary expertise and staff in the schools where they operate. Typically, CDRP centers provide each school with a full- or part-time staff member. Center staff work directly with students and school staff to provide services for individuals who are referred to the program by school teachers and staff. The RP services result in agreements between the parties involved in the conflict or situation that focus on how to resolve the problem and avoid it in the future, with specific actions or requirements for each individual. For example, two students might agree not to contact each other on social media in the future and make amends with each other.

The role of teachers and school staff was typically to engage with the program by completing training and referring students to RP services. In some instances, teachers or staff may also participate in conferences or circles if they were more directly involved in the situation. Schools do not receive direct funding for RP and do not usually offer RP services directly. Instead, schools support and collaborate with the staff from the centers. Schools usually hope to benefit from RP through reduced instances of conflict and fewer student days lost to suspension or other discipline.

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[2] Based on objectives published in the original evaluation RFP: Michigan Supreme Court. (2016). *An evaluation of the use of restorative practices to reduce school truancy and suspensions: Request for proposals*. Lansing, MI: State Court Administrative Office.

Evaluation Summary

This section provides a brief summary of the evaluation purposes, scope, and methods. More details on the evaluation background (see Appendix A), the research, and analysis methodologies used in the evaluation (see Appendix B) can be found in the appendices.

Background

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to determine the impact of the use of restorative practice services on school truancy and suspensions. The scope of the evaluation included all major aspects of school-based RP, including how services were implemented in participating schools, the experiences and views of program stakeholders, and the impact on short- and long-term outcomes. However, it should be noted that the scope of the evaluation was limited in the type of school environment that was assessed: a midsized urban district.

The subjects of the study were schools selected via an open and competitive process, with potential participants solicited via a request for proposals (RFP) during August 2016. Originally, the study was intended to include representation from a wider variety of schools; however, the centers and schools identified from rural and suburban areas were unable to meet the criteria for full study participation. RP service delivery, data collection, and assessment took place over approximately two years. The evaluation captured activities during both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 academic periods.

The evaluation was conducted externally and independent of the SCAO by The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University, which worked closely with the CDRP center and the two schools that participated in the study. Funding for the evaluation was provided by the SCAO and included the cost of the evaluation, grant awards to the CDRP center that provided RP services at the schools, and small stipends to each school to cover direct costs associated with data collection and staff interactions with the evaluation team (funding was provided through their contracts with the center).

Methods

Multiple approaches were used within the larger evaluation project to assess different aspects of the program and to address four broad evaluation questions that are each associated with aspects of the success of RP service delivery. Table 1 summarizes the main evaluation components, key evaluation questions, goals and outcomes, data sources, and general analysis methodologies used in the study.

Table 1. Evaluation Components, Outcome Measures, and Data Sources

Evaluation Component	Evaluation Question	Goal or Outcome Measure	Data Source	Analysis Type/Purpose
Process	Implementation: Did schools provide RP services in a consistent and appropriate manner?	Consistent deployment of RP services	School stakeholder questionnaire or interviews	Descriptive/non-comparative (i.e., feedback for SCAO and schools) for program improvement
	Reaction: How did students react to the program?	Student satisfaction	Student questionnaire	
Process and Outcome	Reach: What was the reach of the program?	Referrals and use of services	State RP database[3]	Descriptive referrals and utilization of services
		Demographics of RP users		
Outcome	Impact: To what extent did the program impact student outcomes?	Disciplinary outcomes (suspensions, detentions)	State RP database / School records	Descriptive
		Attendance/engagement outcomes (absences, tardiness)		Quantitative, comparative analysis using a nonrandom, statistical matching design
		Status of agreements at follow-up	State RP database	Descriptive

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[3] The "State RP database" is a general phrase referring to the MADTrac© software application.

Sample: Selection of Participating Schools

The process of recruiting schools to participate in the study was intended to create groups that would provide the conditions of a natural experiment while also being generally representative of the different types of school environments found throughout the state. The Evaluation Center worked with SCAO staff to create a list of requirements and a general RFP, which was distributed to dispute resolution centers. The goal was to select three to four pairs of schools that meet the following minimum requirements:

- Two school buildings serving at least grades 9-12 must be involved.

- One school building must have established RP services.

- The other school building must *not* have offered services during the past two years and be willing to add RP services during the study period.

- Both buildings should have similar student population demographics and serve similar communities:

    - Free and reduced lunch rates within 10%

    - Enrollment sizes are within +/-15%

    - Offer RP to the same grades

    - Be demographically similar

- Schools leadership must support participation, be willing to participate in an advisory group, and allow access to teachers and staff involved with RP.

- Schools must be willing and able to provide de-identified student data.

Initially, three dispute resolution centers providing services to two schools (six total) were selected to be part of the study sample. Each pair of schools was located in a different geographic environment and was intended to represent a different cultural, socioeconomic, and political environment within the state. Unfortunately, schools or centers in two of the three regions (representing rural and suburban environments) were unable to meet the criteria necessary for inclusion in the final evaluation study. The study was completed using data from two schools that are located within the same school district and are representative of the inner city of a midsized urban environment in Michigan.

Limitations

Like all evaluations, the assessment design and process were constrained by several limitations, which are acknowledged below. These limitations do not invalidate the study findings but can provide context regarding the strength of evidence.

Overall

- It was not possible to involve all schools that currently have RP services, or all centers that provide RP services, in the study. The results represent a singular midsized urban environment and may not be generalizable to all other settings.

- Ideally, the study would have examined a more complete set of outcomes, including expulsions. Unfortunately, it was not possible to look at the impact of RP on expulsion rates during this study.

Case Management Database

- The MADTrac© case management database system records all instances of students participating in RP. However, it may exclude instances in which individuals receive informal services or other benefits provided by the CDRP centers at the schools.

Satisfaction Surveys

- Measurement of stakeholder satisfaction outcomes was based on self-reported data derived from surveys.

- Two parent surveys were conducted—one for parents who directly participated in RP with their child and one covering all parents at each school—to gauge broad awareness of RP and satisfaction with the services. Unfortunately, neither survey generated enough responses to be included in the final published results. However, some qualitative comments and general trends from the overall parent survey are discussed.

Evaluation Results

Impact: To What Extent Did the Program Impact Student Outcomes?

RP may impact student suspensions and attendance rates in some settings.

Overview

- The established provision of RP services was associated with a significant, school-wide impact on both discipline (suspensions) and absenteeism (truancy).

- RP was also associated with reduced instances of tardiness.

- RP agreements directly reduced the severity or duration of formal discipline enacted for hundreds of participating students.

Findings

Evidence on student impact was derived from two main sources: a quasi-experimental, comparative analysis of school data and an analysis of data from the case management database system that is used to track all RP services. The data from the participating schools were used to estimate the broad impact of RP services on schools, measured by impact on all students in an RP environment relative to a non-RP environment. Data from the case management system were used to calculate the direct reported impact only on students who received RP services during the study.

School Data

To assess the size and significance of the impact of RP in schools, data on individual students were collected from each school. The data were requested to measure outcomes theoretically related to RP (i.e., disciplinary outcomes, attendance) and to measure demographic traits. The demographic variables were used in the analysis to ensure that differences in outcomes were related to the presence of RP services and not inter-school differences in student populations.

To promote similarity between the groups, criteria were set for study participation.[4] Schools had to have similar rates of poverty (measured by free and reduced lunch eligibility) and demographically similar student populations (e.g., similar levels of minority racial and ethnicity distributions). To account for differences that still exist between the students and schools, a statistical process known as propensity score matching was used to create a comparison group that was functionally identical to the group that

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[4] Discussed in the Evaluation Summary: Selection of Participating Schools section.

had been receiving RP services—a quasi-experimental method recommended within the literature.[5,6] A propensity score is a measure of the probability that each individual would be a member of the treatment group (i.e., student in the school with existing RP services). Propensity scores were used to identify students at the school with new RP services who had characteristics similar to students at the school with existing RP services to form a comparison group (e.g., selected students at the school with new services served as the comparison group) (Figure 1). More information on this matching process and the baseline characteristics of each school is included in Appendix B.
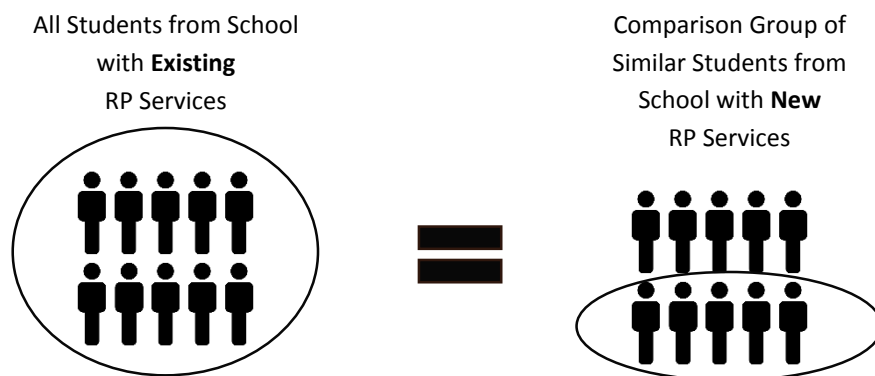

Figure 1. Visual Representation of Propensity Score Matching

Once the comparison group was created, simple means were calculated and compared for each group for outcome variables. The success of RP programming was measured by impacts on student outcomes related to discipline and school engagement—two factors that can be affected when a student faces conflict in the school environment. To measure the impact on students, two major categories of outcome were examined: disciplinary outcomes (suspensions, detentions) and attendance/engagement outcomes (absences from school, times tardy to class). For there to be a treatment effect, the average outcome measure for students at the school with existing RP services should show a positive and statistically significant difference from the comparison group. Any effect was hypothesized to appear during the first year of the study, when services had been active at the school with existing services but were not yet fully established for the school with new RP services. This section provides only a brief summary of analysis and results; a detailed, technical description of the data and analysis procedure is provided in Appendix B.

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[5] Fronius, T., Persson, H., Guckenburg, S., Hurley, N., & Petrosino, A. (2016). *Restorative justice in U.S. schools: A research review*. Retrieved from http://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ_Literature-Review_20160217.pdf

[6] Jain, S., Bassey, H., Brown, M., & Kalra, P. (2014). *Restorative justice implementation and impacts in Oakland schools* (prepared for the Office of Civil Rights, US Department of Education). Oakland, CA: Oakland Unified School District and Data in Action.

Disciplinary and Attendance/Engagement Outcomes

Table 2 compares the outcome results for the school with existing RP services versus the comparison group drawn from the other school. On all four major outcome measures that were examined—suspensions, absences, course tardiness, and disciplinary incidents—the data indicate that there are statistically significant impacts for students in the existing RP school. **Students in the school with existing RP services had fewer average suspension days, days absent, and reported tardy periods than the comparison group of similar students.** There was a lower level of disciplinary outcomes in a context of slightly higher average levels of incidents.

Table 2. Summary of Outcome Impacts from the School Analysis

Outcome Measure	RP School	Comparison Group	Difference	Stat Sig. (p<0.05)
2016–17 All Year (Sem. 1–2)				
Suspension days	0.11	0.31	-0.20	Yes
Absent days	5.67	7.00	-1.33	Yes
Tardy periods reported	21.43	38.43	-17.00	Yes
Incidents	0.55	0.33	0.22	Yes
2017–18 All Year (Sem. 1–2)				
Suspension days	0.21	0.48	-0.27	Yes
Absent days	18.85	22.33	-3.48	Yes
Tardy periods reported	33.53	48.46	-14.93	Yes
Incidents	0.84	0.49	0.35	Yes

Case Management Data

In addition to using the data from the case management system database to assess the reach and usage level of RP services in the schools, an analysis was also conducted to examine the changes in disciplinary outcomes that were reported by the professional RP staff who worked directly with students. For each instance that an RP service was provided, information was recorded about the student(s) involved in the incident, the nature of the incident, and both potential and actual disciplinary consequences. Additionally, when a post-RP follow-up was conducted, the staff recorded whether the student(s) had kept the agreement or followed the plan that was developed as part of the program.

Results

One way that RP can reduce suspension and detention rates at schools is by creating alternate ways of resolving conflict and disciplining the involved parties. According to RP program records, **during the two-year period, there were 628 instances in which a formal disciplinary action was avoided by substituting an informal disciplinary action.** The most commonly avoided consequences were out-of-school suspension (OSS) and in-school suspension (ISS), and the most common substitute actions were warnings. The warnings were typically accompanied by specific actions that the involved parties agreed to in the hope of resolving the conflict (Figure 2).

Out-of-school suspensions were the most common disciplinary consequence avoided through RP.

Figure 2. Discipline Avoided by Type and Percent of Incidents, 2016–2018

Another way that RP affects outcomes is through agreements that reduce the duration of discipline; however, **it is less common for RP agreements to reduce suspension length.** As shown above (Figure 2), it is more common to avoid suspension. During the entire study, there were only 22 instances in which a student facing out-of-school suspensions did not avoid the consequence. Usually in these instances, the duration of the suspension was reduced from an average of 2.3 days to an average of 0.9 days.

Two important parts of RP involve adherence by all participants to any agreement generated during the process and, hopefully, avoidance of the original conflict's reoccurrence. After each RP service event, program staff at the schools were expected to follow up regarding whether the participants have upheld the terms of any agreement developed as part of the RP.

Approximately 9 of 10 participants were still upholding their agreements when post-RP follow-up was conducted.
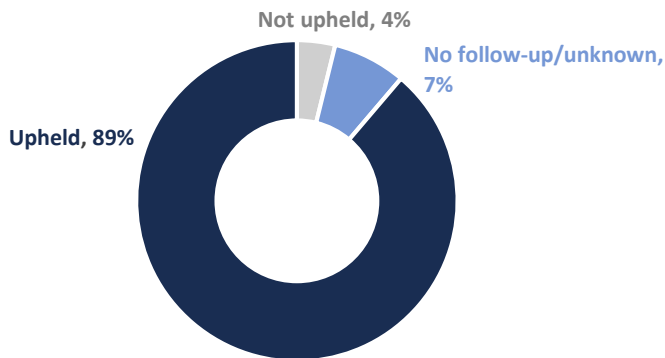
Figure 3. Status of RP Agreements at Follow-Up

Most agreements (89%) were being upheld at the time of post-RP follow-up (Figure 3). The rate that agreements were upheld was examined across several individual factors (e.g., sex, race/ethnicity), as well as by dispute type, to determine whether RP may be more effective under certain conditions or with specific demographic groups. No substantial differences were identified. **Overall, the majority of agreements were kept, at least until the time of follow-up**.[7]

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[7] Standard reported practice is for follow-ups to be conducted four to six weeks after RP service is conducted; however, the case management system database does not include the specific date when follow-up is conducted.

Reach: What Was the Reach of the Program?

RP services were well utilized, though referrals varied across individual demographics.

Overview

- Use of RP services was most prevalent in the lower high school grades (ninth and tenth).

- Students who identified as Black or multiracial were more likely to be involved with RP than other students.

Findings

Michigan RP State Database

The reach and use of RP services was measured through the records kept by the program staff at each of the schools. Program staff entered these records into a statewide case management system database. All data presented in this report reflect RP service referrals and use by high school (Grades 9-12) students only. (However, RP services were made available to younger students in both school buildings.)

Referrals

The number of total referrals increased; the school with existing services used RP the most.
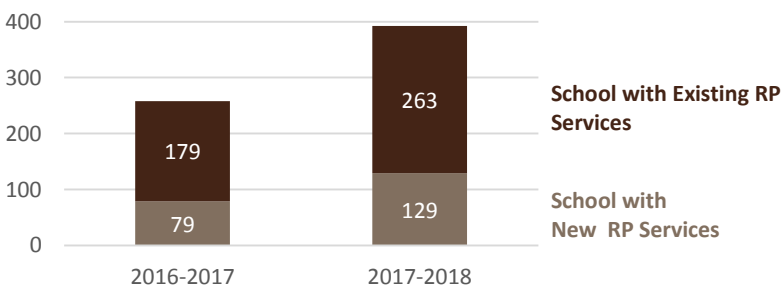
Figure 4. Case Referrals for Schools with Existing and New RP Services

The school with established RP services prior to the study had more referrals overall than the school that began implementing RP as part of the grant (Figure 4). The school with new RP services began quickly using RP once services started.

Use

Use of RP was demographically diverse, though there were some service patterns. RP referrals and use were most common among the lower grades and younger ages (Figure 5). Female students received the

majority of referrals, accounting for 68% of all RP cases during the study period. Staff at both schools indicated that increasing disciplinary issues among female students has been a trend during recent years.

RP services were used with younger students in lower grades.

Figure 5. Distribution of Total RP Usage by Grade

Analysis of RP by race and ethnic classification shows that RP use tended to be highest for Black students (64% of referrals). However, when that number is compared to actual 2017–18 enrollment figures, the ratio of students with RP use to the school population by demographic group shows that Black and multiracial students received a disproportionate portion of RP referrals (Figure 6). These results likely reflect the widely observed finding that African American and other non-White students are more likely to be suspended or face other disciplinary measures than White students for the same offenses,[8] which then leads to more RP referrals.

RP services were provided to a disproportionate number of students that identify as Black and multiracial.
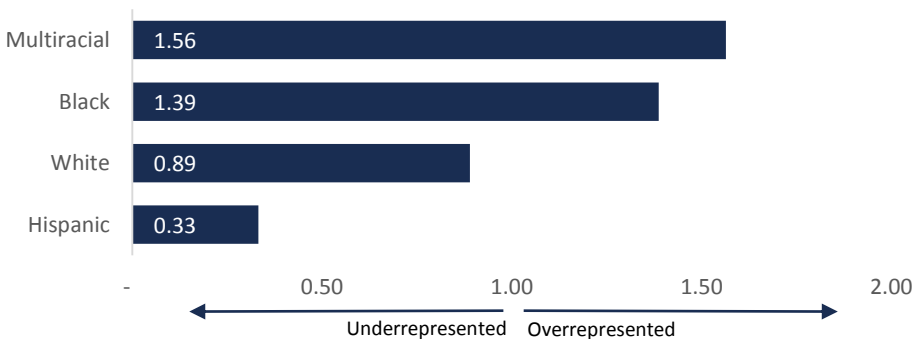
Figure 6. Ratio of RP Users to School Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Categories

A 1:1 ratio would indicate that the portion of students in a race or ethnic category who were referred to RP was the same as the overall proportion of students in that race or ethnic group at the school. Ratios significantly above one indicate overrepresentation, while numbers significantly below one indicate underrepresentation. It should also be noted that Hispanic students received disproportionately fewer referrals to RP services, relative to their portion of the total student population.

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[8] Skiba et al., 2002; US Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014.

Most RP cases involved fights or verbal arguments.
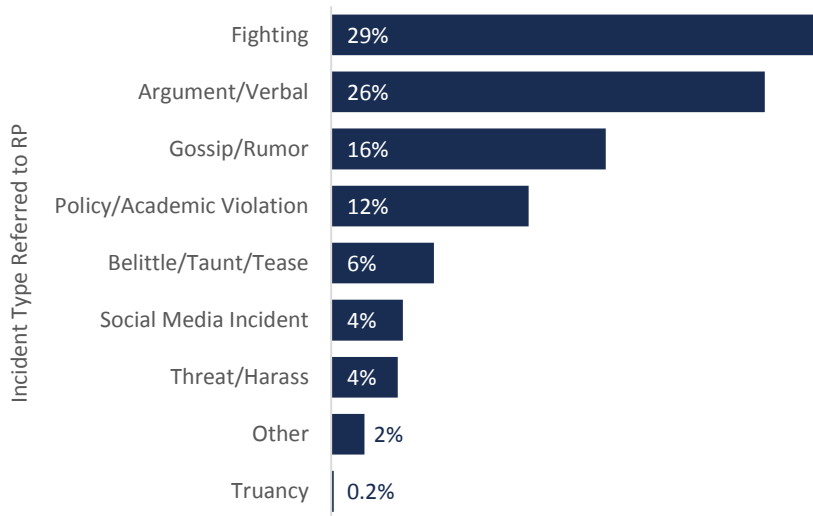
Figure 7. Primary Incident Type for RP Referrals

The most common types of incidents that resulted in RP referrals were fights and verbal arguments (Figure 7). RP was used less often for incidents that primarily involved truancy, threats and harassment, or social media. Although social media was not often indicated as the primary cause of a disciplinary incident, discussions with school staff and teachers indicate that social media is often a contributing factor that fuels other situations, such as fights, arguments, and gossip.

Reaction: How Did Participants React to the Program?

Most students were satisfied with their RP experience and thought it would solve the problem for good.

Overview

- Nearly all students felt that they were treated fairly during RP and that they had a chance to say what they wanted to say.

- Most students were satisfied with the agreement developed during RP and believed that it would resolve the conflict.

- Many students felt that the RP process resulted in a sincere apology.

- Parental awareness of RP was low; some expressed skepticism of the RP concept.

Findings

Student Questionnaire

A total of 350 students who participated in restorative programming completed a questionnaire about their experience and were asked to provide suggestions for improvement. Basic demographic questions were also asked to determine whether perceptions varied across program types or individual characteristics. Based on the data provided from the case management system, we estimate that the response represents approximately 54% of the possible RP cases handled during the study period.[9]

Student Reaction

Figure 8 summarizes the responses collected from all students who participated in RP. A large majority of RP participants responded "yes" to all of the questions, which indicates satisfaction with the program and/or a positive, self-reported, program outcome. The strongest affirmative responses were to the following questionnaire items: "I had a chance to say what I needed to say" (98%), "I was treated fairly" (95%), "Everyone helped make the agreement" (95%), and "I know an adult at school to go to" (95%).

The lowest rates of affirmative responses occurred with the following questionnaire items: "A person who was harmed received a sincere apology" (75%) and "The conflict has not occurred since RP" (83%). Although they did not receive responses as strong as those for other items, these questions were still affirmed by strong majorities of student survey respondents.

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[9] Based on 350 student survey responses and an estimate of 650 cases listed in the MADTrac referral data. It is not possible to confirm the exact number of surveys actually delivered by staff at each school.

It is not clear why only two-thirds of students felt a sincere apology was given in RP. Although apologies are a common aspect of RP agreements, an apology may not be part of the agreement in all situations.[10] Alternately, participants may not have felt that the apology they received or gave was sincere. The low portion of students who affirmed that the conflict had not reoccurred indicates that RP services are not always effective at permanently resolving conflict.

The majority of students were satisfied with RP services.

Statement	Percent
I had a chance to say what I needed to say	98%
I was treated fairly	95%
Everyone helped make the agreement	95%
I know an adult at school to go to	95%
I am satisfied with the agreement	94%
I know how the conflict made others feel	94%
I know I can resolve problems peacefully	93%
I felt others listened to me	92%
I would participate again	92%
Everyone took responsibility for their part	92%
I can better communicate when conflict happens	92%
I will handle conflict differently now	92%
Everyone is following the agreement	89%
I better understand the other side of the story	89%
The plan repaired the harm for the wrong done	87%
I think the agreement will solve the problem	85%
I am on better terms with those involved	84%
The conflict has not occurred since	83%
The person received a sincere apology	75%

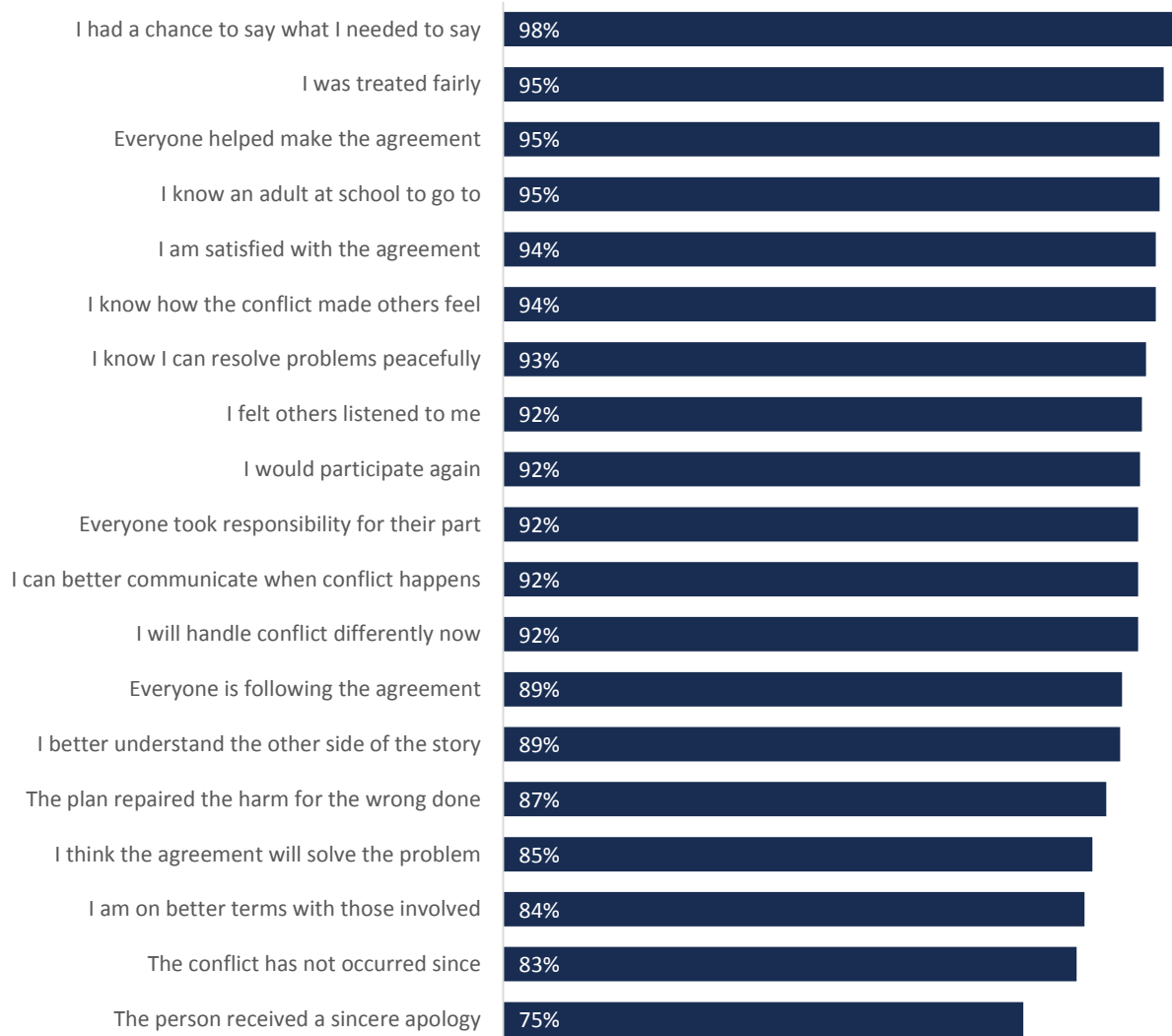Figure 8. Affirmative Student Responses

To assess whether individual traits or program characteristics had an impact on participant reactions, the questionnaire responses were also examined by demographic groupings. However, no meaningful differences stood out.

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[10] Stinchcomb, J., Bazemore, G., & Riestenberg, N. (2006). Beyond zero tolerance. *Youth Violence & Juvenile Justice,* *4*(2), 123–147.

The majority of students (60%) who completed the questionnaire did not provide written comments on their experience or what might make RP services better. Among those who did provide a response, most were short and simple: "I don't know" (or "IDK") and variants of "It is fine as is" were the most common. However, a few students did provide more in-depth suggestions. A list of the most common themes that emerged are outlined below.

Suggestions for Improvement

The most commonly mentioned suggestions on how to improve RP services focused on creating a more comfortable environment for students. Examples include "provide snacks," using a "bigger room" or "better room," and having "comfortable chairs" and "air or fans in the room." Students also commonly mentioned wanting more time to talk during the sessions, both with the facilitator and with one another. Suggestions made by just a few students include having staff follow up with participants, involving everyone who participated in the conflict in RP, and increasing the number of RP staff available. The most frequently mentioned way students felt they could improve RP services was by maintaining respectful communication. Students cited participants talking over one another as a sign of disrespect and emphasized the importance of listening to one another and making eye contact.

Parent Questionnaire

During the spring of 2018, a questionnaire was emailed to all parents of children attending the schools in the study. Only 72 parents responded to the survey, and only 16 of those parents indicated that their child had participated in RP. Both numbers are too low to provide a representative sample of parents. However, several comments and themes arose that may still be worth considering, although caution should be given to interpretation of these findings. About 60% of parents were aware that their child's school offered RP services. An issue that stood out in the comments involved concern that RP was unfair or ineffective in instances of bullying. For example, one parent suggested that RP allowed the bully to "get away" with something without facing adequate punishment. Although small in number, these comments featured parents' details regarding situations that their children had experienced and contained strongly worded skepticism of RP.

Implementation: Did Schools Provide RP Services in a Consistent and Appropriate Manner?

The center provided the schools with an established, mainstream approach to RP.

Overview

- The participating center and associated schools used established approaches to provide RP services.

- The centers controlled RP service implementation, which helped maintain consistency.

Findings

Site Visit Methods

To directly understand the implementation of RP at each site, the evaluation team visited both schools during spring of 2017. Evaluation activities conducted during these visits included meeting and interviewing the CDRP director, conducting focus groups with teachers and school staff who were directly or indirectly involved with RP, and meeting with the RP staff from the center who provided or supervised the provision of RP services in the schools. Finally, as part of the visit, the evaluation team asked RP staff to share stories about RP use and successes, which are summarized in Appendix D.

Program Characteristics

Table 3 summarizes the main program and implementation characteristics for each of the schools and the schools' status as a "new" or "existing" program school. Access to RP occurs through referrals, which are most often made by administrative staff and teachers. Less frequently, police or security officers, mental health workers, and other students can make referrals. Training on how RP works and on how to make referrals had been conducted at the school with existing services and was planned for next year at the other school.

Table 3. Summary of RP Implementation Characteristics by School

Status of RP Services at School	Existing RP Services	New RP Services
RP Service Type	Circles / Conferences	Circles / Conferences
Sources of Referrals	Admin referrals	Admin referrals
	Teacher referrals	Teacher referrals
	Student referrals	Police referrals
	Mental health service referrals	Student referrals
RP Training for Staff	Annual teacher training	Planned for future

Challenges and Suggestions

During the site visits, staff and teachers were asked about factors that could affect the school's implementation and use of RP. The responses ranged from broad issues related to education and discipline to specific tasks that needed to be done within their program or building. The following list summarizes the themes that arose during these discussions. To preserve the anonymity of the individuals who provided these comments within their own school environments, the school type (new or existing program) is not listed.

- **Training.** Teachers and administrators widely agreed that they all needed to better understand RP services, as well as when and why students should be referred.

- **Integration of RP into the existing school structure and resources.** There was discussion of basic resources, such as setting up a better room for RP. A few respondents also wanted more clarity on the roles of various staff and their responsibility for student discipline.

- **Follow-up.** Several comments focused on improving follow-up with students after RP, including better processes for making sure students keep their agreements. Participants also discussed holding special RP sessions for students who have had reoccurring problems during the year.

- **Expansion of service offerings and coverage.** Several participants indicated a desire for more RP staff. Others mentioned that expanding RP services beyond teens would be beneficial—for example, RP in middle or elementary school grades to introduce the concept earlier and services for adult community members to address conflict that spills over or affects conflicts within the school.

Discussion and Conclusions

Is the Investment in RP in the Schools a Good Idea?

Although not an evaluation question, this is the core question of concern for the SCAO, as well as for schools that make the effort to support RP services. In light of recent legislation (2016 MI Act 361 EBH 5619)[11] calling for expansion of the use of RP services across Michigan schools, it is understood that many school boards may be considering whether RP services are effective and whether they are worthwhile to offer in their own schools.

This study provides one source of evidence that RP works. That finding is based on a combination of the significant impact at the school level and the findings from the case management database, which shows the direct effect on RP participants. It is true that the scale of impact on a school- or community-wide basis may be small; however, the direct effect for participants is larger. Expectations should be tempered regarding the size of impact and how easily it can be implemented.

What Lessons Were Learned Regarding RP Implementation?

During the study, several challenges were observed, which could affect the implementation of RP as it is rolled out more widely in other school settings. Although the study only included the assessment of RP results in a midsized urban school setting, the evaluation team observed implementation challenges at the rural and suburban schools that were originally intended to participate. The lessons are cited with the hope that similar issues can be avoided when other schools look to add RP services in the future.

- Allow RP staff to work directly with teachers and staff: At one school that was ultimately excluded from the study, it was revealed that all referrals to RP services were directed to go through administration, instead of having teachers work directly with RP staff. Limiting referral sources has the potential to limit the types of situations and number of individuals who might benefit from RP. At the two schools in the study, referrals could be sent to the RP coordinator by many different members of the school community, including teachers, security staff, and even counselors.
- School policies should reflect RP values: At another school that was also excluded from the study, a "zero tolerance" attendance policy was established at the end of the 2016-17 school year. The policy included counting tardies as absences, and automatically suspending students after a set number of absences, without regard to the details of the situation. Such an approach is contrary to the practice of RP as outlined in the literature. In a restorative approach, the parties would work to create individual-level agreements on how to solve attendance problems rather defaulting to arbitrary disciplinary measures.

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[11] House Bill No. 5619, 98th Michigan Legislature. Retrieved from http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2015-2016/publicact/pdf/2016-PA-0361.pdf

- Turnover may up the need for continual training and internal RP champions. High rates of turnover among administrators and staff may be a challenge to establishing and maintaining an environment for RP. At least one school (not included in the study) mentioned that high staff turnover was an issue. During the course of the study period, the evaluation team found that an administrator who had been supportive of RP had left for another job; it was not clear whether the replacement knew about, or was supportive of, the use of RP services.
- Provide teachers and staff with training before implementing RP: The challenge of training and establishing a culture of RP was noted across schools in the study as well as those that were excluded. None of the schools with new services—either those in the study or that were excluded—had conducted any formal RP training before implementing RP services. Instead, they indicated plans for future training. The literature[12] suggests that successful RP requires an investment in training and time to develop a culture for successful RP.

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[12] For more info, see Advancement Project, 2014; American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Schools

- **Ensure that school policies align with RP principles:** At one school that was originally intended to be part of the study, a new tardiness policy was enacted during the study that mandated an absence recording for students arriving after the class bell. The policy also called for automatic suspensions after a set number of tardy instances were recorded. This approach is counter to an RP approach, which intends to create an agreement that solves the underlying conflict or problem instead of simply enacting standardized disciplinary measures. The result of the policy was an immediate increase in suspensions and absences at the school, since the cases were not referred to RP. The school and region were not included in the study.

- **Provide teachers with more training on restorative practices:** The staff and teachers felt that they (and their peers) needed to know more about RP in general, as well as about referrals and RP programming work at their schools. Although the school with new services planned to offer RP training to teachers and staff, it would be more effective to offer training right away when beginning an RP program or at the beginning of each school year.

- **Increase options for RP referrals:** Teachers or administrators may not always be aware of a conflict when it first happens, and/or they may not always make an immediate referral to RP. One suggestion (made by several teachers) is to create a way for students to be able to make anonymous suggestions regarding peers who are having a conflict and might benefit from services.

- **Share information as openly as possible:** To the extent possible, make teachers aware of students who have had a conflict and are subject to an agreement that was developed during RP. A conflict or RP referral that involves only one teacher or that happens outside of class may not be known about in other classrooms. Being aware of prior conflict may allow teachers to intervene more quickly in the event that the problem reoccurs.

Recommendations for the SCAO

- **Expand the availability of RP services to younger age groups:** The data show that the prevalence of RP-appropriate incidents and associated referrals was highest among ninth grade students and declined steadily with age and grade. Conversations with school and center staff indicated that younger students have the most conflict; as students age, they either have less conflict or the conflict may escalate to incidents that are not referred to RP because of the severity (e.g., weapons, drug and alcohol violations). There would likely be a strong demand for RP funding at the middle school level if it were broadly offered.

- **Do not expect RP to have a direct impact on juvenile court or criminal court outcomes:** The limited data available on conflicts that would directly result in criminal charges or referral to the courts suggest that these instances are rarely referred to RP. Most RP referrals occurred following incidents that might be classified as "mid-level" issues, involving arguments, or fighting. Incidents of violence, weapons use, or drug violations may be subject to rules that require specific actions by the schools or may simply not be viewed as appropriate for RP referral. A direct impact on juvenile court scenarios may not be an appropriate outcome expectation; however, there may be a possibility of longer-term justice system outcomes.

Future Evaluation Recommendations

- **Tighten school participation rules to ensure a fair comparison of RP and non-RP environments:** The study plan originally called for the assessment of RP in multiple environments; however, the schools that were selected at the study onset were unable to complete the study due to issues with inconsistent implementation and adherence to study requirements. Schools must commit to adhering to strict participation guidelines. Additionally, evaluative comparisons may be easier between schools that operate within the same district. Using schools within the same district would help with alignment of school rules and with the data collection process. For example, schools in the same district typically use the same database and data variables, making for easier merging and analysis.

- **Evaluation is warranted for programs serving lower grades and younger age groups:** This study was limited to examining the impact of RP on high school students (grades 9–12). Strong use of RP by younger high school students (and by grade 7–8 students in some of the school buildings) confirms that these students use, and likely benefit from, RP. Future evaluations should focus on identifying the impact of RP on younger students.

- **The impact on expulsions should be examined:** Although the focus of most RP is on reducing student time out of school due to suspensions and truancy, it may also have an impact on expulsions. One challenge in assessing this effect is that schools may not always maintain data for students who have been expelled. Therefore, care will need to be taken to ensure that there is a system in place to collect the variables (e.g., demographics, individual traits, academic performance) necessary to assess student expulsions using analysis techniques common to quasi-experimental designs (i.e., controlling for individual traits and group differences).

- **Schools representing different environments need to be examined:** This study examined RP in a midsized urban school environment. The impact of RP in different socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural environments may differ and should be examined through one or more studies that are able to include schools representing the broad range of schools throughout the state. These should include rural and suburban schools, as well as schools with different student body characteristics.

Appendices

Appendix A: Evaluation Background

Purpose/use: This evaluation was conducted to provide the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) with an assessment of the implementation and impact of restorative practices implemented as part of the Community Dispute Resolution Program.

Scope: The evaluation considered only the implementation and impact of RP services targeting students in grades 9–12 in Michigan schools.

Stakeholder engagement: This evaluation study sought to capture the full range of experiences relevant to all stakeholders involved in, or with an interest in, RP services. A combination of surveys, interviews, focus groups, advisory panel feedback, and analysis of administrative data were used to gauge perspectives and impacts for the following stakeholder groups:

- High school (grades 9–12) students
- Parents of high school students
- School administrators
- School staff
- Teachers
- Dispute resolution centers (i.e., providers of RP services)
- Michigan Court System (e.g., SCAO and Prosecuting Attorneys Association)

Responsiveness to culture and context: The provision of RP services takes place within a wide range of socioeconomic, cultural, and locational contexts. This study took place in schools representing an urban, inner city environment with a relatively high free and reduced-price lunch rate. The schools may not be representative of all environments but are reflective of a school environment where RP may be particularly needed. The evaluation team made efforts to ensure that surveys were widely distributed so that feedback was obtained from all stakeholder groups in the participating schools.

Budget: This study was supported through a competitive grant award of $49,814 provided by the SCAO.

Evaluation team: The key staff for the evaluation were Dr. Brad Watts and Dr. Kelly Robertson. Dr. Watts is assistant director of The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University and was principal investigator (PI) for the study. Dr. Kelly Robertson, a senior research associate at The Evaluation Center, served as co-PI for the study. Project support was also provided by Evaluation Center administrative staff and graduate students, who worked under the supervision of Drs. Watts and Robertson.

Literature Review

"Restorative justice" refers to a social movement to institutionalize peaceful, collective, and nonpunitive approaches to addressing conflict and harm (Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016). The intent of restorative justice is to promote accountability and community safety, and address the underlying social and emotional conditions that lead to conflict (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). The concept of restorative justice originated in pre-modern native cultures of the South Pacific and Americas, which were concerned with whether harm was done to relationships rather than if an act was right or wrong (Fronius et al., 2016).

The implementation of restorative justice into practice is referred to as restorative practice, a term used throughout this report. Restorative practice employs a reintegrative shaming process that prioritizes repairing relationships over the need for assigning blame and isolating offenders. It also involves acceptance or reintegration of offenders back into the community (Braithwaite, 1989, 2004). Through a restorative practice, offenders are held accountable for the harm caused by repairing the hurt or damage according to a plan they create with those impacted by the harm (Fronius et al., 2016). The offender's involvement in the process has been shown to increased perceptions of fairness, which is thought to encourage acceptance of sanctions and greater adherence to laws (Tyler, Sherman, Strang, Barnes, & Woods, 2007).

A retributive approach to justice—often used within the United States' criminal justice and educational systems—employs exclusionary and negative shaming processes that result in offenders being stigmatized and isolated, with control being imposed over their lives (e.g., jail, prison, suspension, expulsion). Restorative justice has been employed in the criminal justice and educational systems as an effective alternative to exclusionary and punitive approaches (American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Bouffard, Cooper, & Bergseth, 2016; Bradshaw, Roseborough, & Umbreit, 2006; Poulson, 2003; Schiff & Bazemore, 2012; Suvall, 2009). For example, use of restorative

Goals of Restorative Justice:

1. **Accountability:** Offenders held accountable for the harm done, not the act that caused the harm, and must repair the hurt or damage caused.

2. **Community safety:** Restorative strategies keep communities safe by providing opportunities for relationship building, and the strategies empower individuals to take responsibility for the well-being of other community members.

3. **Competency development:** Restorative approaches seek to increase the pro-social skills of offenders and address underlying factors that lead to delinquent behavior.

(Ashley & Burke, 2009)

Common Components of Restorative Practices:

1. **Restitution**: Offenders are held accountable for the harm done, not the act that caused the harm.
2. **Resolution**: A collective plan to repair hurt or damage is created and mutually agreed upon by the offender and those who were harmed.
3. **Reconciliation**: The offender is accepted back into the larger community.

(Fronius et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012)

approaches within the criminal justice system has been associated with better outcomes for both victims and offenders. Such benefits include increased perception of fairness, satisfaction with case outcomes, offender compliance, and reduced rates of recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007, 2012; Bouffard et al., 2016; Bradshaw et al., 2006; Hays, 2005; Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005; Leonard & Kenny, 2011; Poulson, 2003; Rodriguez, 2007).

Why Are School-Based Restorative Justice Interventions Important?

Restorative approaches were first implemented in schools during the 1990s as an alternative to exclusionary disciplinary policies such as zero tolerance, which mandate suspensions and expulsions to address behavioral issues (Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Gonzalez, 2012). Research has found that exclusionary zero tolerance-type policies lead to more suspensions, school dropouts, and deviant behavior (American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014; Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006). Exclusionary and punitive practices are thought to perpetuate and worsen problem issues. Suspension and expulsion isolate students and serve as a missed opportunity for learning or repair for harm done (Suvall, 2009). Additionally, use of suspension and expulsions increases the amount of time students spend outside of the classroom, which is associated with poor academic performance and decreased likelihood of high school completion (Balfanz et al., 2014; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). For example, a study by Balfanz et al. (2014) found that students who were suspended in the ninth grade were twice as likely to drop out of high school.

Restorative approaches have been used in schools to reduce conflict, keep kids in school, and address concerns about historical disparities in punishment and their long-term impacts. It is well established that African American and other non-White students are more likely to be suspended or face other disciplinary measures than White students do for the same offenses (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Paterson, 2002; US Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014). Restorative practices have been used to reduce historical racial and ethnic disparities in the school and juvenile criminal justice systems (Gonzalez, 2012; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016; Jain, Bassey, Brown, & Kalra, 2014; Simson, 2012). Restorative practices provide students and staff an opportunity to learn and strengthen capacity that can reduce conflict by addressing the root cause of issues—repairing relationships between those involved in conflict (Fronius et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016; Simson, 2012). For example, improved relationships between teachers and students through use of restorative approaches in the classroom have been associated with reduced racial disparities in the application of exclusionary punishment and related negative consequences (Gregory et al., 2016).

Restorative justice can help to decrease exclusionary behavior (such as suspensions and expulsions) and harmful behavior in school (Fronius et al., 2016). Studies have found 20% and 90% reductions in school suspensions and office referrals, respectively, after the implementation of RP interventions (Armour, 2013; Baker, 2009; Davis, 2014; Mirsky, 2003; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006; Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010). The literature also suggests restorative justice interventions in schools have a positive impact on academic achievement, student behavior, student time in the classroom, student connectedness, student and staff relationships, and school environment (Jain et al., 2014; Karp & Breslin, 2001; McCluskey et al., 2008; Mirsky, 2003; Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2004).

Studies have typically found a 25-60% reduction in the rate of absences after the implementation of multiyear RP interventions (Baker, 2009; Jain et al., 2014; Mirsky, 2003; Stinchcomb et al., 2006). Jain and colleagues (2014) also found an association between RP interventions and improved short- and long-term academic achievement, such as improved reading level and increased graduation rates for high school and four-year education.

What Is Restorative Justice in Schools?

Restorative justice programming varies widely across schools—the variance resulting from differing understandings of restorative justice and best practices (Fronius et al., 2016). Common types of restorative practices implemented in schools are described in Table A1 (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016). Programming can be implemented school-wide through training of staff and students and/or as a supplemental approach used to respond to conflict as it arises. While programming may look slightly different across locations, all programs tend to embody the basic tenants of restorative justice, which include holding offenders accountable for the harm caused, implementing a mutually agreed upon plan to address that harm, and acceptance of the offender back into the community (Fronius et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

Table A1. Common Types of School-Based Restorative Programming

Type	Description	Who is involved	Used in response to
Formal restorative or peacemaking circles	A facilitator brings individuals together to discuss an issue or resolve a conflict. The facilitator encourages parties involved in or impacted by a conflict to share their perspectives through safe and open communication.	• Trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Staff and/or students	• Issues that impact a group of people, such as students or staff • Moderately serious incidents
Informal restorative circles/ Restorative discussions	A trained facilitator helps individuals discuss a conflict or issue of concern. These circles may happen in response to an event or be offered regularly.	• Trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Staff, students, and/or parents	• Minor student worries or incidents • Often proactive/ preventative • Student challenges or parental worries

Type	Description	Who is involved	Used in response to
Restorative mediation or conferencing	A trained mediator brings together parties involved in or impacted by a conflict to develop an appropriate response to the conflict. Often, mediation or conferencing is a scripted process, as there is a larger focus on accountability.	• Trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Teachers, students, staff, or parents	• Serious conflict or indicants • Reactive • Try to prevent suspension or expulsion
Peer mediation or jury	Students are trained to help other students resolve differences. Peer mediation intends to empower peer mediators to become leaders and build conflict resolution skills.	• Trained student mediator • Supervision by a trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Students	• Minor to moderate conflict • Reactive

The most common approaches to implementing restorative justice in schools are mediation, conferences, or larger group meetings, often referred to as circles. Participants typically include victims, offenders, and a facilitator. However, larger circles may also be attended by other individuals affected by the conflict, such as students or teachers from the same classroom where the conflict originally occurred. Interventions typically involve direct communication between the victim and offender or community members who serve as a proxy for the victim (Bouffard et al., 2016). Indirect mediation, led by a neutral third party, facilitates the process without direct contact between the victim and offender (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007, 2012). Mediation conferences and circles begin with attendees explaining the situation from their point of view and then work to develop a collaborative plan to redress the harm caused. Restorative plans often include restorative sanctions, which in the school setting often include community service, apologies, or behavioral change agreements. Offenders are encouraged to comply with such agreements in exchange for an incentive, such as avoiding or reducing time spent in suspension or detention (Stinchcomb et al., 2006).

Most school-based restorative justice programs have been found to be successful to some degree across settings (e.g., public, private, or alternative schools; urban or suburban environments; and school- or district-wide implementation) (Fronius et al., 2016). There is evidence to suggest that circles, conferences, and peer mediation—the most common forms of RP—have positive outcomes related to student behavior, time spent in the classroom, and school environment (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016). Bouffard and colleagues (2016) compared different RP models and found that no matter what the approach—direct, indirect, formal, or informal—all are associated with a reduced risk of juvenile recidivism. Therefore, Bouffard and colleagues (2016) suggest that it may be possible to use less intensive RP approaches (i.e., indirect mediation) for younger offenders or those without a criminal history while still maintaining positive outcomes. They also suggest it may be possible to reserve more intensive versions of RP for older youth who have repeated histories of disruptive behavior. All RP approaches have

been shown to work best when integrated into the wider school or district culture (Advancement Project, 2014; American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

It is difficult to compare results of studies within or across different RP approaches. These difficulties are related to the confounding impact of the various terms used to refer to RP, various definitions for RP, and various understandings of what constitutes best practice (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Further, existing RP studies tend to be less rigorous—that is, they tend to employ methods that limit trust in their results or do not allow for the generalizability of results across RP interventions. Common issues related to rigor within the body of RP research include exclusively descriptive studies, data collection focused on participant satisfaction and perception, lack of comparison groups, and small sample sizes (Fronius et al., 2016). Therefore, as with all research, the conclusions of much of the literature need to be interpreted with some caution.

Challenges of Implementing Restorative Justice Programs in Schools

Although there has been growth in the adoption of restorative justice approaches in K-12 schools, its use is far from universal. This section highlights some of the major barriers to school-based restorative justice programs.

Resource requirements: RP approaches entail significant costs not associated with traditional disciplinary approaches, such as staff time and buy-in, training, and resources. RP works best when integrated at the school or district level, so appropriate practices are ingrained in the culture and reflected in policies and procedures (Advancement Project, 2014; American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Successful adoption and integration of restorative justice practices require getting staff on board and trained, which can take years and usually require sustained funding (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Evans & Lester, 2013; Fronius et al., 2016; González, 2012; Karp & Breslin, 2001). It is recommended that teachers, RP staff, and all other school stakeholders receive one to two consecutive days of RP training and 20-40 hours of coaching per year (Jain et al., 2014). Research suggests that school-wide shifts in attitudes in favor of restorative justice approaches may take one to five years (Evans & Lester, 2013; Karp & Breslin, 2001). Obtaining funding for sustained implementation of restorative programming can be challenging, as most funding is dedicated to establishing buy-in, building funding, and collecting data (Fronius et al., 2016). It is suggested that support should be set aside for sustaining existing programming and for continued training for staff and administrators (Advancement Project, 2014). Given these requirements, it is not surprising that many schools are either unable or unwilling to commit to using a RP.

Tension with existing processes: It can be challenging for schools to move from zero tolerance-type policies to restorative approaches. Such challenges can involve matters of habit, conflicting principles of the approaches, and the required level of behavioral change, as well as the demand for additional upfront resources and time (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2010; Suvall, 2009). Restorative practices can also be more difficult for students in the short term because in addition to being held accountable for their actions, students must think about, address, and act to repair the harm done (Ashley & Burke, 2009).

Challenges around the use of shaming: Holding offenders accountable for actions inherently implies a shaming process. A restorative approach seeks to evoke a reintegrative shaming process that "acknowledges the impact of the wrongdoing on both the offender and those who were harmed" (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 5). The process of reintegrative shaming seeks to foster empathy, understanding, and hope for healing across individuals in order to achieve reconciliation and reacceptance of the offender into the community (Braithwaite, 2004; Wachtel, 1999). Reintegrative shaming involves "treating the wrongdoer respectfully and empathically as a good person who has done a bad act and making special effort to show the wrongdoer how valued [they are] after the wrongful act has been confronted . . ." (Vaandering, 2010, p. 163). "I do not like what you are doing, but I like who you are so let me walk with you as you solve this problem'' (Wachtel, 1999, p. 2) is an example of a statement that demonstrates how this might be accomplished. Approaches often used in the United States tend to evoke a negative or stigmatized shame by assigning blame for the act that caused the harm, sending a negative message about the offender's self-worth and isolating the offender from the community (Vaandering, 2010). Given the fine line between reintegrative and negative shaming, schools must be extremely careful to ensure that the correct approach is actually being implemented by teachers and staff, particularly if there is not a well-trained facilitator available on site.

Not always appropriate for situations involving bullying: There is debate regarding whether restorative justice services should be used to address bullying in schools. Some studies suggest that using a restorative approach to address bullying is more effective than traditional punitive disciplinary approaches because RP focuses on repairing relationships (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Christensen, 2009; Howard et al., 2010; Molnar-Main, 2014; Morrison, 2006). However, other researchers note that because bullying results from power imbalances, victims are often in a vulnerable position and may not feel comfortable facing their abusers and the potential for retaliation (Morrison, 2006). Therefore, it is suggested that RP not be used for all cases of bullying and that there be well-trained adult facilitators involved in cases of bullying to navigate these power dynamics and identify effective resolutions (Fronius et al., 2016; Molnar-Main, 2014).

Appendix B: Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods are described for each evaluation question.

An overview of evaluation methods can be viewed in Table 1 in the main report.

Implementation Methods: Did schools provide RP services in a consistent and appropriate manner?

Outcome Measure: The outcome measure for this evaluation question was the degree to which RP services were delivered in a consistent manner and whether these approaches align with best practices.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Data sources and collection methods included school stakeholder questionnaires, site visits, focus groups and interviews, and a literature review focused on school-based RP services.

Instruments: A copy of the school stakeholder questionnaire, site visit protocol, and school staff focus group protocol are located in Appendix C.

Timeline: All site visits, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups were completed in May 2017.

Analysis Methods: The analysis is descriptive and based on site visit notes, questionnaire responses, and a review of how the RP service models compared with the literature.

Limitations: At each school, we were able to speak with several school staff and/or RP staff. At each school, the evaluation team interviewed a key school leader (e.g., principal or assistant/vice principal) and some teachers and staff directly involved in implementing RP. At some schools, informal focus group sessions took place involving teachers and other non-administrators/non-RP staff members. Additionally, 13 school staff who could not attend the site group interviews completed an online questionnaire.

Reaction Methods: How did students react to the program?

Student Satisfaction

Outcome Measure: Student satisfaction was self-reported and measured through multiple RP participant survey items.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Paper satisfaction questionnaires were provided by RP staff on site at each of the schools. All participants were asked to complete a survey after the

conclusion of an RP service. Pre-paid return envelopes were provided for each questionnaire to ensure confidentiality for students, and surveys were mailed directly to the evaluation team.

Instruments: A copy of the participating student questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

Sample and Description: All students who participated in RP services were asked to complete a questionnaire. In total, 350 completed surveys were received during the study, which is an estimated response rate of 54%, calculated based on an estimate of 650 RP cases recorded in the urban region.

Timeline: The questionnaires were available for students to complete throughout the 2016–17 and 2017–18 academic years—that is, September 2016 until June 2018.

Analysis: Questionnaire responses were entered into an Excel sheet and simple counts and descriptive analysis were conducted.

Limitations: Reaction is measured based on self-reported survey results and not an unbiased, observable measure. The actual response rate is unknown. Surveys were handed out by program staff, and it is not possible to confirm the full number of surveys delivered or whether the surveys were consistently delivered to all participants as requested.

Parent Satisfaction and Awareness

Outcome Measure: Parental satisfaction and awareness of RP services were measured through multiple self-report survey items.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: An online survey covering awareness of RP and satisfaction with RP service was conducted for all parents at both of the schools in the study.

Instruments: A copy of the general parent questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

Sample and Description: The intended sample was all parents of students in grades 9–12 at each of the schools in the study. Only 72 surveys were completed—an insufficient response for use in the study.

Data Collection Procedures: Invitations to participate were delivered by the administration at each school. This was done to protect the privacy of families and was also based on the assumption that the parents would be more likely to respond to a request from the school. The evaluator developed the survey instrument and provided a link to the survey website, which was customized for each school.

Timeline: The survey was conducted electronically during January and February 2018.

Analysis Type/Purpose: n/a

Limitations: The sample size is too small to draw conclusions about the overall parent population.

👥 Reach Methods: What was the reach of the program?

Outcome Measure: Reach of RP services was measured using data from the case management system used to track RP service cases at all participating schools.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: All data were collected in a system called MADTrac©, a case management software application that has been developed for the CDRP centers by the state. Use of MADTrac is mandatory for dispute resolution centers receiving money from CDRP. Data were input by dispute resolution center staff or RP staff, as mentioned in the report.

Instruments: The data provided from MADTrac included the following fields:

- Case #
- Student #
- # Served
- Referral Date
- Disposition Date
- School
- County
- Race
- Sex
- Age
- Grade
- Have IEP

- Dispute Subtype
- Referral Staff
- # of Sessions
- Total Minutes
- Initial Consequence
- # of Hours-Initial
- Final Consequence
- # of Hours-Final
- Avoided Due to RP
- # of Hours-Avoided
- Service Provided
- Avoided Discipline

- Program Code
- Conflict Between
- Incident Description
- Comment
- Monetary Rest
- Payment Desc
- # of Work Hours
- Work Desc
- # of Serv Hours
- Service Desc
- Agreement Comp

Sample Size and Description: The sample includes all students who received RP services during the study period (2016–17 and 2017–18).

Data Collection Procedures: Data were entered into the MADTrac system by RP staff at three points in time for each incident: 1) when students are referred for services, 2) right after services are delivered, and 3) follow-up 30 days after the incident. The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) pulled the data from MADTrac and provided it to the evaluation team.

Timeline: Data were entered into MADTrac on an ongoing basis. SCAO provided the evaluation team with final data from MADTrac in July 2018.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics (i.e., counts and percentages) were conducted on referrals and use.

Limitations: The MADTrac database contains information only on students who have formally participated in RP. Data on students who received informal counseling or other benefits from RP services or CDRP center staff may not have been recorded.

Impact Methods: To what extent did the program impact student outcomes?

Disciplinary and Attendance/Engagement Outcomes

Outcome Measure: The outcome measures for the impact analysis were indicators of attendance (absences, tardiness) and disciplinary records (suspension days, detentions) as recorded and reported by the schools.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Data consisted of individual-level student data recorded by each of the schools in their records (or the school district if the school was part of a district-wide data collection system). All information was recorded by the schools and reported to the evaluation team at the end of each academic year during the study.

Instruments: Data requested from each school included the following. Items in bold were identified as high priority.

- **Student ID or Similar for Matching/Tracking**
- **Gender**
- **Age**
- **Race/Ethnicity (may be separate codes)**

- Homeless Status
- **Free and Reduced Lunch Status**
- Ability/Disability Status or Specialized Learning Plan
- Single-Parent Household
- Native English Speaker

Student records data (repeated by student on a yearly basis)

- **Semester or Year**
- **Enrollment Status**
- **Grade Level**
- Referred to RJ Services (y/n)
- Received RJ Services (y/n)
- **GPA**
- **Disciplinary Incidents**
- **Detentions**

- **Absences (total days)**
- Absences (excused days)
- Absences (unexcused days)
- Partial Absences (missing partial day, total days)
- Late/Tardy (total days)
- Write-Ups or Other Formal Discipline
- **Expulsion Status**
- Awards or Recognitions

Sample Size and Description: The sample included all students in grades 9–12 at each of the schools, regardless of whether they had participated in RP services or not.

Analysis Methods Discussion: The purpose of using propensity score matching was to create a comparison group that was equivalent to the group at the school with existing RP service. To

demonstrate this, the table that follows (Table A2) compares the demographics of the school with existing services and the comparison group created from the population of the matched students (through use of propensity scores) from the school with new RP services. Note that the table lists the school with existing services twice, presenting the demographics based on a raw total of all students for which data are available and a smaller matched subset of students. The reduction in the number of students included in the analysis is a result of individuals being excluded due to one or more missing data points for the variables included in the propensity score analysis.

Differences in traits between the existing service school and the new service school—measured by the available demographic variables—disappear or are greatly diminished in the weighted comparison group. Through the process of propensity score matching, the matched groups have become functionally equivalent based on observable characteristics. Therefore, it is possible to assume that differences in outcomes are most likely related to the known difference in conditions (existing implementation of RP services) instead of socioeconomic variance.

The propensity score matching process also provided a good demographic match between the groups (Table A2). The new service school is substantially smaller than the existing service school. Because of this difference, there was a larger number of duplicate matches required to achieve a balanced match. Still, on most measures, the demographic variables are within 1-2 percentage points across the groups. It should be noted that the authors have a high level of confidence in the alignment and comparability of the data because the data were collected at the district level. That is, the methods of collecting and measuring each indicator are identical across both schools.

Table A2. School and Matched Group 2016–17 Demographic Comparison

Demographic Variable	Exiting Service School	New Service School	Matched Existing Service School	Matched Comparison Group
Female	49%	44%	49%	50%
Age (avg. yrs.)	16.1	16.4	16.1	16.0
Race/Ethnicity				
White	23%	14%	23%	21%
Black	43%	59%	43%	43%
Hispanic	15%	9%	15%	15%
Multiracial	9%	8%	9%	9%
Free or Reduced Lunch	82%	86%	82%	82%
Homeless	1%	1%	1%	1%
Disability Status	15%	23%	15%	16%
Single Parent Household	40%	35%	40%	41%
GPA (avg. scale)	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.3
N (weighted)	1,537	613	1,420	1,420

Data Collection Procedures: Data were requested and obtained directly from the district.

Timeline: Data were obtained from each school or school district twice at the end of the 2016–17 academic year and 2017–18 academic year.

Final Comparative Analysis: Once the comparison group was created out of individuals who were matched to the school with existing services group, simple means were calculated and compared for each group. The outcome measures were compared between the existing school (which began providing RP prior to the study) and the matched comparison group to test the hypothesis that the established presence of RP services has an impact on attendance and disciplinary outcomes.

Limitations: Measurement of some demographic variables (e.g., race and ethnicity) and outcomes (e.g., attendance) varies across participating schools. For example, some schools recorded more or fewer categories of student race and ethnicity. The attendance variable was reported differently across schools. Some simply reported the number of full days absent for each student, while others provided detail on the number of courses missed during the day, which was then used to calculate an average of days missed.

Status of Agreements at Follow-Up

Outcome Measures: The upholding of agreements was measured by RP program staff during a follow-up conducted with each student participant approximately four to six weeks after completion of RP. Adherence to the terms of the agreement was assessed by the staff member and entered into the database.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Data measuring the upholding of agreements were taken directly from the MADTrac case management system, which was developed for the CDRP centers to track and report on RP services. Use of MADTrac was mandatory for dispute resolution centers receiving money from CDRP. Data were input by dispute resolution center staff or RP staff, as mentioned in the report.

Sample and Description: All students who participated in RP services were recorded in the database.

Timeline: Data were entered into MADTrac on an ongoing basis. The SCAO provided the evaluation team with data from MADTrac in July 2018.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were calculated on whether agreements were upheld.

Limitations: The MADTrac database contains information only on students who have formally participated in RP. Data on students who received informal counseling or other benefits from RP services or CDRP center staff may not have been recorded.

Appendix C: Data Collection Instruments

Site Visit Protocol

Purpose: To directly collect qualitative information on the implementation of RP services from key stakeholders involved in providing services or referring students.

Audience/Population: Stakeholders involved in implementation of RP at the school.

Implementation: The evaluation team visited each of the schools in May 2017. The visits included a main meeting, which consisted of a discussion with center directors and school staff. The meetings were conducted as a focus group, with the following questions guiding the discussion:

Questions

1. What restorative justice services has the Center implemented at each of the schools?
    a. Student services
    b. Restorative justice training? To what extent? (school wide)

2. How is the program implemented? Walk us through a typical scenario so we can see the whole process.
    a. How do you choose which intervention types for students? Ever put offenders with low recidivism risk factors in less resource intensive interventions?

3. Difference in implementation between schools?

4. What's working particularly well?

5. What are the challenges to implementation?

6. What are the areas for improvement? On Center's part? On schools' part?

7. How do you fund this program? Do you get financial support from places other than the state? [Principal] – Email? Have time with?

8. Are there other services being offered in the school or community that could be impacting out of classroom time? Or academic outcomes?
    a. Of youth that attend the high school, have any attended elementary or middle school programs where RJ was implemented?

School Staff Focus Group Protocol

Purpose: To directly collect qualitative information on the implementation of RP services from teachers and staff involved in the programming at each of the schools.

Audience/Population: Teachers, RP staff (ex. Center directors), and school administrative staff directly involved with RP as approvers, trainees, and providers of referrals.

Implementation: Interviews and informal focus groups were conducted as part of the school site visits that occurred during May 2017. The format depended on the availability of various staff at each of the schools and included one-on-one interviews, small group discussions, and larger focus groups.

Questions

1. How do you use the restorative justice services and how does it turn out for you?

2. When and why do you refer students to the restorative justice programming?

3. Do you see any changes because of the restorative justice services?

4. How do the restorative justice services add value to your school? / Do you think the restorative justice services are positively benefiting students? / Staff and administrators?
   a. Students getting less time out of the classroom
   b. Students getting better educational outcomes (grades)
   c. Student relationships better with students? With staff?

5. Impacts on a broader sense of how to handle conflict? Sort of just case by case—not think about it until it gets to that point?
   a. Do you think there has been an impact on school climate in terms of how students and staff think about addressing issues?

6. What's working well? And why?

7. What could be improved? And why? From the Center's/delivery/support? On school's end?

8. Are there other *things* going on that could be impacting student outcomes in terms of reduced time out of the classroom? Grades?

School Staff Questionnaire

Purpose: This questionnaire was offered as another way for teachers and staff to provide feedback on their perceptions of RP service implementation. The focus was primarily on qualitative, open-ended questions. Through the questionnaire, those who were unable to attend a focus group or interview had a chance to provide broad feedback.

Population: School staff who were involved with RP but were unable to attend the May 2017 school focus groups.

Implementation: The questionnaire was provided in May and June 2017 via electronic survey that was passed on by school administrative staff. The survey was primarily relevant at existing schools where RP services had been in place for some time, in settings where a larger group of teachers and staff had experience with the services.

Response Rates: These questionnaires were combined with the notes from the staff focus groups and interviews conducted during the site visit. There was not a specific sampling frame or target population, as the questionnaire was provided as a convenience and supplemental form of qualitative data collection.

Questions:

Western Michigan University's Evaluation Center was contract by the Michigan State Supreme Court Administrative Office to evaluate their school-based restorative justice services. The Evaluation Center is implementing this questionnaire to learn how staff view the restorative justice services offered at their school. In particular, we are interested in learning how the restorative justice services impact students and the wider school community, as well as how the restorative justice services can be improved.

---

1. What school do you work at?
    a. [choice list]

2. What role do you play in the school?
    a. Teacher
    b. Administrator
    c. Staff member
    d. Other: _____

3. To what degree do you have experience with the restorative justice services at your school? (Please select all that apply)
    ☐ a) I am not aware of the restorative justice services offered at my school *[If selected, skip to thank you page]*

☐ b) I am aware of the restorative justice services but have not directly participated in them

☐ c) Students I have interacted with have attended the restorative justice services

☐ d) I have referred students to the restorative justice services

☐ e) I have participated in the restorative justice services

☐ f) I have attended a training on restorative justice practices through my school

4. When do you refer students to the restorative justice programming? And when do you not? [Text box] *[Appear if "I have referred students to the restorative justice services" is selected in question 3]*

5. What changes, if any, do you see in the students or your school as a result of the restorative justice services? [Text box]

6. How could the restorative justice services be improved? [Text box]

Participating Student Questionnaire

Purpose: To collect feedback from participants regarding their satisfaction with RP services and self-reported post-service outcomes.

Audience/Population: All students who participated in an RP service at any of the schools.

Implementation: The survey was conducted via paper survey forms, which were handed out to student participants by RP program staff who were based at the school. It was requested that the forms be handed out to participants after final completion of their RP experience.

The forms were printed by the evaluator and provided to each school site. Pre-paid return envelopes were provided for sending the surveys directly to the evaluator. This was done to reassure the students of the confidentiality of their responses as well as to eliminate the burden of collecting and sending surveys for the school and center staff.

Response: In total, 350 completed surveys were received during the study. We estimate that this represents a return rate of around 54%, based on cases listed in MadTRAC. The rate can only be estimated, since RP staff did not keep track of the actual number of survey forms delivered to students.

The next page provides an example of the items used in the questionnaire. Note that this does not include the customization for the programs at each school site.

1. What did you participate in at school?

☐ Circles   ☐ Focus group or support group

2. Please answer the following about the circle or focus group.

	Yes	No		Yes	No
I would participate again.	○	○	Everyone helped make the agreement.	○	○
I was treated fairly.	○	○	I am satisfied with the agreement.	○	○
I had a chance to say what I needed to say.	○	○	I think the agreement will solve the problem for good.	○	○
I felt others listened to me.	○	○	Everyone is following the agreement.	○	○
I better understand the other person's side of the story.	○	○	I learned how to better communicate when conflict happens.	○	○
I am on better terms with the people who were involved in the conflict.	○	○	I know an adult at school that can help fix my problems with others.	○	○
Everyone took responsibility for their part in the conflict.	○	○	I know I can resolve problems peacefully.	○	○
I know how the conflict made others feel.	○	○	I will handle conflict differently than before.	○	○

3. What happened as a result of the circle or focus group?

	Yes	No
The plan repaired the harm or to made up for the wrong done.	○	○
Detention or suspension was avoided.	○	○
The days of detention or suspension was reduced.	○	○
An agreement was made to avoid an expulsion.	○	○
A person who was harmed received a sincere apology.	○	○
The conflict has not occurred since the circle or focus group.	○	○
Court or legal actions were avoided.	○	○
Other:		

4. Please tell us about yourself:

Grade _____

Age _____

Gender _____

Race(s)/ethnicity(ies)

☐ Asian
☐ Black or AA
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ Native American
☐ Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Other_____

5. What would make the circle or focus group better?

General Parent Questionnaire

Purpose: To measure parent awareness of the availability of RP services in the schools and to collect feedback on the perceptions of parents regarding the usefulness and impact of RP on their children.

Audience/Population: The parents of all high school children attending any of the schools involved in the study.

Implementation: Based on the parents' responses to an early sorting question, the online survey provided a different set of questions based on their familiarity with RP services.

The survey was conducted electronically from January to February 2018. Invitations to participate were delivered by the administration at each school. This was done to protect the privacy of families and was also based on the assumption that the parents would be more likely to respond to a request from the school. The evaluator developed the survey instrument and provided a link to the survey website, which was customized for each school.

Response: A total of 72 parents responded to the surveys.

The text below provides a listing of the items used in the survey but does not display the customization and graphics, or the branching logic, used in the electronic questionnaire.

Parent and Guardian Survey on School Restorative Practices

This survey is being conducted to learn about your views on restorative justice services being offered in your child's school. These services include mediation, conference circles, and/or peer focus groups. Restorative justice services are intended to teach problem solving, reduce conflict, and provide more effective discipline in the school.

What do we want to learn?

We want to find out if you are aware of these services. If your child (or children) participated in a restorative justice service, we want to hear about the experience. Your response will help to determine if this is an effective and useful approach.

Who will see your responses?

Your individual response will be kept confidential from your child's school. To ensure the anonymity of all respondents, the results are being collected and summarized by Western Michigan University's Evaluation Center.

If you have questions about this survey, please contact XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Please click 'NEXT' to begin the survey.

Are you aware that your child's school offers "restorative justice" services (such as mediation, circles, peer focus groups, or conferences) in some instances as an alternative to traditional disciplinary action? Yes – No [branch point]

Did your child or children participate in restorative justice services provided by the school?

No - Yes, one or more of my children participated - Not sure

What activities did your child participate in? If you have more than one child who has participated or if your child has attended multiple services, please respond only for the most recent experience. (Select all that apply)

[activities list custom]

Please answer the following about the restorative justice services. If you have more than one child who has participated or if your child has attended multiple sessions, please respond only for the most recent experience. Yes – No – Don't know/NA

a) Were you satisfied with the services your child recently participated in?

b) Would you recommend participation in the services to other parents with students facing conflict?

c) Do you think the agreement made in the conference or mediation will solve the problem for good?

d) Has your child followed through on their part of the agreement?

e) Was your child treated fairly?

f) Were you satisfied with the outcome?

g) Is your child now on better terms with the others involved in the conflict or issue?

h) Did your child's participation in the services help them resolve the conflict?

i) Did your child learn how to handle issues or conflict?

j) Do you and your child communicate more about issues at school?

Have you noticed any changes in the behavior of your child since participating in the restorative justice services at school? Please describe. [open end]

What happened to your child as a result of participating in the restorative justice services at school? If you have more than one child who has participated or if your child has attended multiple sessions, please respond only for the most recent experience. Yes – No - Don't know or not applicable

a) A plan was made to repair the harm or to make up for the wrong done.

b) An agreement was made to improve attendance and/or reduce tardiness.

c) A person who was harmed received a sincere apology.

d) The conflict has not reoccurred.

e) Detention or suspension was avoided.

f) The days of detention or suspension were reduced.

g) An agreement was made to avoid expulsion.

h) Court or legal actions were avoided.

i) Other (Please specify):

Please tell us a bit about your child or children. If you have more than one child in the school, please answer for the individual who most recently participated in a restorative justice program at the school.

Grade?

Age?

Gender?

Race / Ethnicity (select all that apply) [choice list]

Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding your child's experience with restorative justice services? [open end]

Thank you! Select the 'NEXT' button below to exit the survey.

Appendix D: Student Success Stories

All student success stories were submitted by dispute resolution center staff. Therefore, the evaluation team cannot confirm the accuracy of these stories. Stories have been slightly modified for consistency of language and to conceal the identity of the school and students.

School with New RP Services

Student Encouraged to Think of Legal Implications of Streaking

During a follow-up visit with RP staff, Robbie stated that he was preparing to get "famous." Robbie told RP staff that he was going to streak during a professional basketball game. The RP staff then suggested that Robbie speak with someone regarding the legal implications of his idea. The school's police officer joined the conversation and helped Robbie understand the legal risks of such a plan. Two days later, Robbie told the RP staff that he thought about the conversation he had with her and the police officer and decided against doing the "get famous quick plan."

School with Existing RP Services

Problem Students Helps Other Students Solve Conflict

Trisha constantly argued with everyone: her classmates, teachers, and administrators. Trisha had a sharp tongue and a negative attitude. Trisha's temper surfaced quickly when told to do something she did not want to or when told not do something she wanted to do. Trisha frequently found herself in the principal's office for violating a policy or for inciting unsafe conditions. The principal referred Trisha to peer mediation or RJ conferences to either avoid or reduce suspension. Trisha and RP staff had many conversations. At the end of her junior year, Trisha started coming to the mediation room to work through issues as they arose. In her senior year, Trisha signed up to be a mediator. Most of Trisha's teachers were skeptical to say the least. Initially, administration rejected Trisha's application, yet Trisha put together a solid argument for the principal regarding why she should be a mediator. The principal granted Trisha's request for a probationary period. As the year moved forward, Trisha started seeing how adults perceived her when she got into disputes with other students. It was a real eye opener for her. Trisha stopped arguing with her teachers and chose to speak to them in a calm mature manner. Trisha chose her words carefully and accepted the answer received whether she liked it or not. More importantly, Trisha started helping classmates work through conflicts in class. Trisha's class participation improved dramatically and so did her grades. Teachers let RP staff know just how mature Trisha had become since becoming a mediator. Even the principal remarked on how Trisha changed and seemed like a completely different person. Trisha is now in college and, from what RP staff heard, is doing very well. Trisha told RP staff that having the peer mediation credential helped her obtain an offer to attend the college.

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