

Northwestern College, Iowa

NWCommons

Master's Theses & Capstone Projects

Education

Summer 2023

Using Restorative Practice to Decrease Behavior and Increase School Community

Kaylee West

Follow this and additional works at: https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/education_masters



Part of the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#)

Using Restorative Practice to Decrease Behaviors and Increase School Community

Kaylee West

Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa

Abstract

The purpose of this school improvement plan (SIP) is to address the student behavioral concerns at Huntington Elementary School using restorative practices. Studies suggest that restorative practices can improve student behavior and social emotional skills. The restorative practices that the author intends for the school to use are described within the plan. The SIP aims to use training on restorative practices and restorative circles to improve school culture, community, and student behaviors.

Keywords: restorative practices, restorative circles, behavior, school climate, community

Table of Contents

Abstract.....2

Introduction.....4

Literature Review.....5

Site Profile15

 Community Characteristics.....15

 School District Characteristics.....15

 School Building Characteristics.....16

 Student Portfolio & Performance.....16

 Professional Development Practices16

Needs Assessment.....17

Data Analysis18

 Behavior Data18

 Analysis of Data.....19

Action Plan.....20

 Purposed Improvement Plan20

Implementation of School Improvement Plan22

 Introduction of School Improvement Plan.....22

 Timeline and Overview.....22

 Limitations26

Conclusion27

References.....28

Using Restorative Practice to Decrease Behaviors and Increase School Community

Student behaviors have made it increasingly difficult for teachers to manage and instruct students. Teachers must find new ways to engage their students and help support their emotional needs. When students feel safe in the learning environment, they are much more capable of learning (Evans C., 2021). Educators know that when students feel safe, they can be engaged in learning and not behaviors. At Huntington Elementary School, student behaviors have increased for the 2022-2023 school year. According to the school data provided by the Tier 1 Behavior Team, in grades K-5 the average number of out of class movements was 15 calls per day in August, 21 in September, 26 in October, 21 in November, and 4 for the first part of December (Sellenrick, 2023). These calls were for assistance that required a behavior technician or an administrator. Educators need to find a balance in their teaching to support social and emotional needs of students to prevent disruptive behaviors (Zimmerman-Leizerov, O. & Jerome, J., 2022).

The purpose of this school improvement plan is to address the increasing behaviors at Huntington using restorative practices to decrease those behaviors. Huntington students are in need of support to decrease behaviors and the out-of-classroom movements that occur. Recent data has shown increasing behaviors and a need to change current practices. Restorative practices create a culture of healing and serve as a “resilience-building strategy for both educators and students.” (Gonzalez, et. al., 2018). Through the growth in student emotional well-being and resiliency with Restorative Circles, the goal is that student behaviors will decrease.

Research for this paper was drawn from the ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) database, the WorldCat discovery tool through DeWitt Library, and Google Scholar. Articles were peer-reviewed and published between 2013 and 2023. Research was conducted under the parameters of restorative practices, restorative practice circles, and Restorative Justice.

Included in the parameters are student perspectives, teacher perspectives, high school, middle school, elementary school, studies in the United States, and studies around the world. The focus is on the use of restorative practices Circles and their effects schoolwide. Lesser focus is on other components of Restorative Practice in schools.

The belief is that through restorative practices, specifically using Restorative Circles schoolwide, there will be a decrease in student behaviors and out-of-classroom movements due to behaviors. A change in behaviors will happen because teachers will increase student resiliency while helping students achieve better emotional well-being. When teachers implement Restorative Circles and Restorative Language into their daily instruction, student behaviors will lessen due to their feelings of support and safety (Zimmerman- Leizerov, O. & Jerome, J., 2022).

The first section of the literature review describes the use of restorative circles, including how they impact students and schools. The second section focuses on student and teacher perspectives and beliefs about restorative practices and circles. Most of these articles discuss the use of Restorative Circles in classrooms with the study's focus being on perspectives and beliefs that occur before and after using them. The final section discusses the use of restorative practices to decrease student conflicts, behaviors, and discipline incidents.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to discuss the research that guides this school improvement plan. The research was not limited by demographics or geographic areas. The literature review is outlined into four sections: Restorative Circles, Student and Teacher Perspectives and Beliefs About Restorative Practices, Restorative Practices to Decrease Student Conflicts and Behaviors, and Restorative Practices and Discipline Incidents. Each section will include multiple journal articles pertaining to the heading. Journal articles discussed will cover

only the topics related to restorative practices and results of the study pertaining to the school improvement plan.

Several studies address the use of restorative practices and circles in schools to improve student behavior and school community.

Restorative Circles

In a study by Parker & Bickmore (2020), restorative circles were utilized in a public middle school. The study includes the observation of four schools' use of restorative language and how teachers implemented the circles in their classrooms, was observed by researchers in 35 classroom observations (Parker & Bickmore, 2020). During two workshops participants received training on restorative practices and principles (Parker & Bickmore, 2020). Following the observations, the researchers conducted interviews and analyzed notes.

There were four principles that occurred from the observations and interviews. The principles were nonviolence and mutual respect in student interactions, inclusion of diverse students in peer talk, responsiveness to contrasting viewpoints and depth of critical reflection, and talk about social conflicts (Parker & Bickmore, 2020). These principles show that how teachers understand and implement restorative circles are “centered on building classroom community and communicative fluency through participating in dialogue.” (Parker & Bickmore, 2020).

Circles are not limited to general education classrooms. In the study by Hemphill et al. (2022), circles were utilized in a physical education setting. Researchers focused their study on the implementation of circles in a physical education classroom and the data collected from “group interviews, student journals, observations, and reflective field notes” (Hemphill et al., 2022). The data used from the reflections recorded provided researchers with information

“immediately after each class” (Hemphill et al., 2022). Other data was also collected from the previously mentioned student journals, group interviews, reflective field notes, and observations. Data collected was inputted into software that could be shared among researchers (Hemphill et al., 2022). Using a shared software platform, researchers were able to use an inductive analysis process with multiple researchers. Findings demonstrated that restorative justice can be implemented into a physical education program and build “community and strong relationships among peers” (Hemphill et al., 2022).

Restorative circles are used to improve school climate and community. The use of restorative circles “improve school climate by supporting conflict resolution and community building” (Wang & Lee, 2018). Community building and resolving conflicts support the use of restorative circles in schools. Circles can be used in a variety of ways and for various reasons (Wang and Lee, 2018). Circles can be utilized to solve conflict between teachers and students, discuss behavior, and repair harm. Educators and schools who use restorative practices will benefit from using restorative circles in classrooms as a conflict and community building resource.

Implementing circles into schools needs support to be beneficial. Having “trusting relationships” already established plays a key role in implementation (Wang & Lee, 2018). Giving students leadership in the implementation of circles and restorative language is critical in aiding the implementation and success of circles (Wang & Lee, 2018). Students need leadership of the circles and restorative language to aid in the engagement and buy-in that students will have for circles to be successful.

Restorative Circles provide students with skills to lead and move away from punitive punishments caused by behavior. The study by Lustick et al. (2020), provides insight to how schools can utilize Restorative Circles to build student social and emotional skills. Students build

skills through circles with a teacher who is like a personal and academic coach. The study conducted by Lustick et al. (2020) used data from three schools, two secondary schools and one middle school. Findings found that implementation of circles and success relies on relationships between teachers and students (Lustick et al., 2020). According to Lustick et al., with training and relationships in place, students can work together to find solutions to problems. Students are therefore utilizing restorative practices in their daily lives to solve problems and issues in school.

These findings support the idea of circles being implemented in schools to build community.

Student and Teacher Beliefs

Positive student and teacher beliefs about restorative practices lead to successful implementation of restorative circles and restorative practices. Garnett et al. (2022) utilized mixed method questions in a survey on restorative practices. The goals of the questions were to gain views and experiences of restorative circles use in classrooms. Interviews were conducted with 17 school staff and 107 third through fifth grade students (Garnett et al., 2022). The participants were given a beginning-of-the-year and end-of-the-year survey. Results from the study showed that teachers believed students improved in “social emotional development and growth” after circles were implemented into classrooms. Garnett et al.’s (2022) findings give evidence that teachers and students have positive beliefs about restorative practices.

Student well-being and collective coherence is impacted positively by restorative justice. Reimer (2020) used qualitative questions to gain student perspectives on the impact of restorative justice on their school. Fifth and sixth grade students were chosen for the study exposing three components that students felt after utilizing restorative justice regularly: school lives were comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. The study also concluded that students’

exposure to restorative circles allowed for students to experience all three components at one time (Reimer, 2020).

Beliefs about restorative practice affect implementation and the impact of restorative practices in schools. Dhaliwal et al. (2023) used qualitative questioning to analyze the beliefs 363 educators had about restorative practices and how their attitudes impacted implementation of restorative practices. The data focuses on how beliefs, hindrances, attitudes, and effects of implementing restorative practices influence each other.

The majority of educators in the study did not seem to support punitive discipline, a perspective that is important to restorative practices as they are opposite to punitive disciplines (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). Students learn about their behaviors when they participate in restorative practice circles, communicate, and express thoughts and feelings better. Skrzypek et al. (2020) studied student perspectives from 49 fifth grade students and 41 eighth grade students at an urban low-income school. The study consisted of a mixed method survey on student perspectives of circles. Findings revealed themes from the student reports including communication and expressing thoughts (Skrzypek et al. 2020).

Restorative Practices to Decrease Student Conflicts and Behaviors

With the use of restorative practice, students can utilize reflection to understand the impact their behaviors have. Kehoe et al. (2018) studied the positive impact restorative practices had on students in six schools in Australia via observations and surveys given to teachers and students. In the schools, restorative practices were present for four years, and staff received training on restorative practices. Five themes emerged: harmony in the environment, empathy for others' feelings and ideas, awareness and being accountable for one's actions, respectful relationships, and thinking reflectively or the acronym H.E.A.R.T. (Kehoe et al., 2018). Students

and teachers felt the school had a calmer environment due to the use of restorative practices (Kehoe et al., 2018). With the use of restorative language, students felt that they were able to reflect on the impact their behavior had on themselves and others (Kehoe et al., 2018).

Student leadership and whole-school intervention with restorative practices increase positive peer social and emotional competency. In the study by Gonzalez et al. (2018) qualitative data is collected to describe restorative justice practices being implemented over a seven-year study. The school in the study gave students leadership roles by having student-led restorative practices in place. Gonzalez et al. (2018)

Restorative practice increases student happiness and decreases student behaviors. Norris (2018) administered a questionnaire to three schools in Los Angeles, California. The three schools all implemented restorative practices in their own ways using what worked best for their schools. The third school was the only school to choose a proactive model and to increase positive communication strategies throughout the school in classrooms and between all staff and students. In comparison to the two other schools, the third school was the only one to use consistent school-wide strategies and to have positive outcomes for students and their happiness (Norris, 2018).

Student bullying can be reduced positive and positive behaviors can increase with a whole-school plan of restorative practices. In the study by Acosta, A. et al. (2019) 2771 students from 13 middle schools were given surveys to measure the impact of restorative interventions. Acosta et al. (2019) reported feeling an improvement of school connectedness, climate, social skills, peer interactions, and reduced bullying after using restorative interventions. A more supportive school environment with restorative practices and interventions suggests that bullying can be reduced, and positive student behaviors can increase (Acosta et al., 2019).

Discipline and Attendance:

Schools utilize restorative practices instead of punitive punishments if there is an understanding of restorative practices. Payne and Welch (2017) use mixed methods of surveys and questionnaires to collect data about 263 public secondary schools. The results show that schools use restorative techniques to address behaviors when there is a higher population of students, but not if there is a lack of understanding and familiarity (Payne & Welch, 2017). The data suggests that utilizing restorative practice instead of other discipline responses is preferable, but schools with a lack of understanding don't utilize it consistently. Educators and students need familiarity and understanding for restorative practices to be used instead of other punitive punishments. There needs to be a shift in thinking for schoolwide use of restorative practice to happen.

Student attendance and tardiness are positively impacted when using restorative practices. Watts and Robertson (2021) use data from two urban high schools in the United States, comparing one with restorative practices and one without over a period of two school years. When comparing schools, the data shows averages of tardies, absences, and suspensions are lower from the school with established restorative practices (Watts & Robertson, 2021). The data also revealed that the school with restorative practices would have a higher minor incident rate. The higher incident rate may be considered concerning to some, but it also makes the point that there is resolving of conflicts before it gets to the point of suspension, leaving students in school more (Watts & Robertson, 2021). When using restorative practices, student attendance and tardiness are positively impacted.

Whole-school restorative practices can impact student discipline incidents. In a study by Gregory et al. (2022), 18 high school, middle school, and elementary schools were randomly

assigned to be in a control group or a group using restorative practices. Results of the study show that the percentage of incidents of behavior in the control groups were higher than those in the intervention group using restorative circles (Gregory et al., 2022). The presence of lower incident rates of students indicates that there will be fewer suspensions and major incidents in schools with restorative practice (Gregory et al., 2022). This study could be used to further investigate if lower incidents also means that students are positively impacted to change behaviors.

If implemented, restorative practice offers educators an alternative to discipline that focuses on punitive approaches. Kervick et al. (2020) conducted a study of an urban public elementary school (K-5). Data was collected through interviews and surveys given to students and staff over one school year. Research was conducted to find what processes were used in the implementation year and how they align with alternatives to punitive measures. The principal encouraged staff to use circles proactively and for community building as much as possible (Kervick et al., 2020). Results showed that educators who utilized restorative practices fostered a collaborative culture and positive classroom community (Kervick et al., 2020). The positive classroom and collaborative culture allude to the idea that there will be less punitive discipline.

Weaver and Swank (2020) used qualitative data to study restorative practices as a form of discipline at a middle school of about 1,000 students in the Southeastern part of the United States. Data was collected over five months using interviews, review of documents, and observations. The results indicated five themes that go with integrating restorative practice for discipline practices: restorative activities, relationships, a different approach, expectations, and meaningful consequences (Weaver & Swank, 2020). Each theme was clarified through interviews with administrators and educators. Administrators stated that using traditional discipline was not working, so a different approach was needed (Weaver & Swank, 2020).

Restorative practices are a different approach to discipline that will help with student behavior. The intervention utilized agreements to describe and illustrate how students can show respect for others. Students were to write letters to those who they have harmed or have harmed them, giving students a way to reflect on their actions. This alternative to discipline gives students time to process their actions and to make amends in a thoughtful way. The school in the study also gave students meaningful consequences such as picking up trash if littering, coming into school on a day off if skipping school, and writing letters of apology (Weaver & Swank, 2020). Building relationships and setting expectations are important to build trust and for restorative environments to be successful (Weaver & Swank, 2020). The study results show the importance of building each theme into schools for restorative disciplines to work.

Restorative interventions can decrease the likelihood that students will receive out-of-school suspensions and office referrals. In a study by Anyon et al. (2016), data was collected from the first semester of school on restorative interventions to predict discipline outcomes for the following semester of school. The author's goal was to collect data to determine if restorative interventions used on students lowered their risk of having an office referral (OR) or an out-of-school suspension (OSS). Results of the study found that for students who participated in one or more restorative interventions, their odds of having an OR or OSS were lowered for the second semester (Anyon et al., 2016). With the use of restorative interventions educators can lower the odds of students receiving more referrals or suspensions.

Educators should give students voice and input to help fix and restore relationships harmed when there is conflict. Brasof (2019) studied the impact of a restorative justice "Youth Court" where students are the leaders and help to address misbehaviors. Students are given leadership roles to help solve conflict and misbehaviors by creating the consequences and ways

to solve the issues. Results found that students were more likely to get their peers to discuss behaviors in depth (Brasof, 2019). The researchers also found that students created consequences that were more restorative such as verbal apologies, written apologies, volunteering, tutoring, restoration of vandalized property, reflective essays, and other unique ways to reduce conflict (Brasof, 2019). Giving students voice and input to solve conflict creates a restorative solution to behavior.

When turning to restorative practices as an alternative to punitive exclusionary disciplines, it is important to know that for restorative practice to succeed, punitive discipline cannot be used. A study done by Joseph et al. (2021) included mixed methods with interviews, observations, artifacts, and suspension data from a Pennsylvania urban high school. The high school used restorative practices to improve disciplinary outcomes. Findings revealed barriers that impeded implementation, such as punitive practices that continued to be used along with restorative measures (Joseph et al., 2021). Although the school chose to implement restorative practices, their continued use of punitive measures created a barrier to gain more positive outcomes. For restorative practice to be successful in schools, punitive measures should not be used.

Conclusion

The research studies included show that with restorative practices, student behavior and school community can be impacted positively. It is important to recognize that student and teacher perspectives of restorative practices can affect implementation of restorative practices. When implementing restorative practice, the use of punitive punishments impedes restorative measures. Restorative practices can support the school climate and community if used. More research is needed to plan and implement restorative practices at Huntington.

Site Profile

Community Characteristics

University Place is in the Northeastern part of the Lincoln city limits in Nebraska. According to census.gov (2022), Lincoln has approximately 292,627 people as of July 2022. Of Lincoln's population, 22.4% is under the age of 18 and 6.1% under the age of 5. Ethnicities range in percentages with 82.8% being white, 8.1% Hispanic or Latino, 5.9% being two or more races, 4.6% Asian, 4.1% Black or African American, 0.7% being American Indian and Alaskan Native, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. According to census.gov (2021), the average household in Lincoln has 2.36 people with the median household income being \$62,566. Lincoln has 13% of people in poverty and 92.9% of people being a high school graduate or more. In Lincoln, 12.7% of people ages five and older speak another language other than English at home.

District Characteristics

According to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) website (2022) Lincoln Public Schools has 74 schools with 41,747 students. Of those students, 37.1% are of a race other than white and 32.8% are of a low socioeconomic status (Nebraska Department of Education, 2022). The student racial demographics are 64.2% white, 15.4% Hispanic or Latino, 9.1% two or more races, 7% Black or African American, 4.7% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Lincoln Public Schools has 9.3% of students learning English and 32.8% on free or reduced lunch (Nebraska Department of Education, 2022).

The Lincoln School District employs over 3,000 general education teachers (Nebraska Department of Education, 2022). According to Lincoln Public Schools over 1,400 of those

general education teachers have a master's degree and 26 have a doctorate. In the district 35.4% of teachers have been in the district from one to four years, and 17.1% have been in the district for 20 years or more (Lincoln Public Schools, 2022). The district also has over 2600 people employed who work in other areas of the district such as custodial and maintenance.

School Building Characteristics

Huntington Elementary has been in the Lincoln Public School District since 1912. According to the Huntington Elementary School website (2023) the original school building was demolished in 1997 and a new building was created. The school is a Title 1 building. Huntington has partnered with nearby Nebraska Wesleyan University for over 25 years (Lincoln Public Schools, 2023). Huntington has a mission to “educate, empower, and equip every student” (Schirmer, 2021).

Student Portfolio & Performance

There are about 400 students at Huntington in grades PreK-5. The school population is 47% female and 53% male, with 53% being of a minority race (U.S. News, 2021). The school also has 83% of students being low socioeconomic status and eligible for free or reduced lunch. Out of 489 schools in Nebraska, student performance is ranked 453 on reading proficiency and 458 in math proficiency. Students score consistently below the district and state in subject proficiency according to U.S. News (2021).

Professional Development Practices

The Lincoln Public School District (LPS) requires that all new teachers to the district attend a week of professional development. All educators then attend district-required learning along with the new educators. LPS requires building professional development and district professional development hours each year. Each building chooses when the district and building

professional development occurs. Educators then have Professional Learning Community (PLC) days where students are let out early for grade-level teams to meet and plan with each other, special education teachers, administration, and other professionals in the building. New teachers in years 1-3 also have additional professional learning to complete through tenure courses once a month for the first three years of their teaching in the district.

LPS requires buildings as well as teachers to create personal goals for the building and for themselves. Each teacher chooses two goals based on a domain such as professional community and communicating with families. Each domain creates a topic on which to base your goal. Educators are observed throughout the year by their appraiser, which is either their principal or vice principal. Multiple informal observations and one formal observation occur each semester. After each formal observation, educators and appraisers complete an evaluation that is then shared with each other in a meeting to discuss scoring. Educators reflect at the end of the year on their goals set at the beginning of the year. Educators must also submit artifacts to provide evidence of meeting their goals and domains for the year.

Needs Assessment

Huntington Elementary School needs behaviors to decrease and school climate, culture, and community to improve. Specific needs include fewer calls for support, less need for movement out of the classroom, more need for problem solving, more need for school climate and community, and more need for students and teachers to work through conflict together. In August of 2023, there were 193 behavior entries for out-of-class movements, in September there were 421 behavior entries, and for 12 days in October, there were 258 entries (Sellenrick, 2023). Behaviors show the need for evaluation and intervention of procedures. School culture, climate, and restorative practice play a part in improvements in these areas (Watts & Robertson, 2023).

The author chose to focus on restorative practice, specifically restorative circles to decrease behaviors and increase community. Behaviors at Huntington are distracting and disruptive to learning. The reasoning behind the choice of restorative practices is because restorative practices have been shown to increase student classroom community, build relationships, and develop understanding between students (Parker & Bickmore, 2020). This school improvement plan aims to use restorative practices and the community building it offers to decrease student behaviors. It is also being used to create a culture of problem solving and understanding for students and teachers.

Data Analysis

Behavior Data

Huntington has only one source of official data for the school. Data shown in Table 1 labeled “Average Per Day Per Month” was originally gathered and created by Sellenrick (2023) using Synergy, which is LPS’s behavioral and academic data collection site. It is used by all LPS schools including Huntington. Data provided is limited to behaviors recorded on Synergy by teachers and staff; the graph may not include all data on behavior that the school had seen for the school year. The data is represented by the average number of behaviors that required an out-of-class movement in the months of the school year that are abbreviated in the table.

In August of 2022 there were an average of 16 behaviors recorded per day. The total number of reported behaviors in August was 193, with 61 of them requiring an out-of-class movement. An out-of-class movement means that the student needed to be moved to the reset room where students work with a behavior tech to work through their problem before going back to class. A reset of behavior could be talking through their problem, working for a break, using calming strategies, or other steps to get the student ready to go back to class. This data is limited

to the behaviors that were recorded on Synergy and may not reflect the actual number of behaviors by students.

Table 1

Average Per Day Per Month

| Month | N |
|-----------|----|
| August | 16 |
| September | 21 |
| October | 26 |
| November | 22 |
| December | 18 |
| January | 17 |
| February | 19 |
| March | 16 |
| April | 13 |
| May | 3 |

Note. N = the average number. The table was adapted from the original created by Sellenrick (2023).

Analysis of Data

The data in Table 1 shows the average number of behavior calls per day per month at Huntington for the months of August to May for the 2022-2023 school year. There was an increasing trend in behaviors from August to September, but a downward trend from November to January. These trends could be due to the number of days in school, or things happening in the school at the time. It seems that what was occurring in the school from November to January decreased behaviors in the classroom. The data is impacted by how educators were reporting or not reporting data.

More data would need to be collected in multiple ways to increase the validity of the numbers. There would need to be recording of number of behaviors that occur daily from each

class and grade level. To limit teacher workload, the data recording would need to be simple and transferred to Synergy by someone daily or weekly.

Action Plan

Proposed Improvement Plan

This school improvement plan is proposed to occur over two years in phases. Each phase will be part of the goal to use restorative practice to improve student behaviors and school climate and community. Each phase will address one or more of the following:

1. Improving school community and culture.
2. Reduce student behaviors by 30% with the use of restorative practices, specifically Restorative Circles.
3. Implementation of restorative practice Schoolwide.

| Date | Phase | Administration | Teachers | Students |
|---------------------------|--------------|--|--|--|
| Fall Semester 2024 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial training • continuous training • Data collection on behaviors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire/survey about behavior • Questionnaire/survey about restorative practices beliefs and understandings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection on behaviors |
| January 2025 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce restorative practice to educators and parents • Create an implementation model that matches school matrix/ update matrix to match restorative practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial training • continuous training • Survey/questionnaire for implementation ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection on behaviors • Continued survey/questionnaire on meaningful consequences |
| March-May 2025 | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of implementation of restorative practices • Training dates and opportunities for summer months • Meaningful consequences selected based on student questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up for summer training opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued data collection on behaviors • Preview of restorative practices • meaningful consequences chosen |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|--|--|--|
| May-August 2025 | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer training attended • Meetings on implementation and expectations with student selected consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending summer training and meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A |
| August 2025 | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce restorative practice to students by modeling with teachers and staff • Discuss student selected meaningful consequences and a student leader group to help | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement restorative practices in the classroom • Attend monthly meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior data collection begins • Student leadership opportunities • Restorative practice training with classroom teachers |
| August-December 2025 | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued modeling of restorative practice and language • Monthly meetings and discussions • Staff survey mid-year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued practice in classrooms and monthly meetings • Complete mid-year survey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior data collection continued • Student survey mid-year • Student leaders training and practice |
| January-May 2026 | 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued modeling of restorative practice and language • Monthly meetings and discussions • Staff survey end-of-year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued practice in classrooms and attendance of monthly meetings • Complete end-of-year survey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior data collection continued • End-of-year student survey • Student leader training and practice continued |
| May 2026-On | 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing the data • Creating a presentation of the data for staff and families • Continued training and practice • Looking ahead: meetings to discuss next steps and improvements to restorative practices | <p>Looking Ahead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued practice and implementation • Yearly training and quarterly for retained teachers and staff • Monthly training for new teachers and staff | <p>Looking Ahead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued practice and training • Yearly surveys and selection of student restorative leaders |

Implementation of School Improvement Plan

Introduction

The school improvement plan includes multiple phases of implementation. The action plan above outlines the duties and responsibilities of each person involved in the improvement plan. Each phase of the plan will be implemented over two years, after which any changes in student behavior will be assessed.

Timeline and Overview

Phase one will occur in the fall semester of 2024 from August to December. The administration will be given initial training on restorative practices and continue to train throughout the semester. Lincoln Public Schools has trainers specializing in restorative practices who will be a resource for training at Huntington. Administrators will also collect student behavior data through Synergy. Data will be printed monthly and recorded on graphs to be used throughout the study. Teachers will be given a survey or questionnaire regarding student behavior and their beliefs and understandings about restorative practices.

Phase two will occur in January of 2025. This phase will include administrators introducing restorative practices to teachers, staff, and families to build interest. Administrators will also work on an implementation model that matches the school matrix or update it to match restorative practices. Teachers and staff will attend initial training sessions and complete a survey about implementation ideas for restorative practices. Data collection on student behavior will continue to be reported and printed. Students will be given a questionnaire about meaningful consequences they think should be given to students for different behaviors.

The plan's third phase will occur between March and May of 2025. The administrators will notify staff and teachers about implementing restorative practices and when training dates are for the summer months. Administrators will also select the meaningful consequences that students suggested in the questionnaire. Teachers and staff will sign up for the summer training opportunities provided. Student behaviors will continue to be monitored and reported. Students will be given a brief overview of restorative practices and the chosen meaningful consequences.

For the school improvement plan, the fourth phase will occur in the summer and the beginning of the school year (May-August 2025). During the summer months, the administrators

will work on summer training and create meetings with staff and teachers about implementation and expectations. The meetings will discuss using circles in the classroom setting, answering questions that may occur. Teachers and staff will be given a list of meaningful consequences created by students. Administrators will provide examples of when it is appropriate to use those consequences and how to use circles with them. Administrators will describe the expectations of using circles, recording behaviors, and utilizing non-punitive punishments. Staff and teachers will attend summer training courses and meetings to be prepared for the school year implementation phase.

August 2025 is when phase five will occur. In this phase, the administrators will introduce restorative practices to students by modeling a circle with staff and some teachers. The circle will be a low-risk circle, using only topics that are engaging, such as asking what they are excited about for the school year. Administrators will model what a circle will look like in the classroom with circle norms, a talking piece, and having two rounds. Administrators will introduce student-selected meaningful consequences again and student leader group to help with restorative practices. Administrators will explain what it means to be in the restorative practice student leader group. Teachers and staff will begin implementing restorative circles and language in classrooms. Implementation will include creating a set of student and teacher-decided circle norms, discussing the talking piece, and introducing restorative language. Teachers and staff will continue to attend monthly meetings and training courses on restorative practices. Students' behavior data will begin again and continue to be recorded and created in a data chart. Students will be nominated for the leadership group for restorative practices. Students will be learning about restorative practices in daily messages from Administrators and through circles in the classroom.

Implementation of phase six will occur from August-December of 2025. During this phase, Administrators will continue to model restorative practices through monthly circles, daily announcements, and the use of restorative language with students. Administrators will continue to have monthly meetings with staff and teachers to have discuss restorative practices and address any changes or concerns that occur. Administrators will give a survey to staff and teachers in December, asking about behaviors and their beliefs and understanding of restorative practices. In the classroom, teachers and staff will practice circles and use restorative language with students. Teachers and staff will complete the survey in December and attend monthly meetings. Student behaviors will continue to be collected and reported. Student leaders will be chosen for the leadership group. If students are selected, they will attend additional training with Administrators and teachers to understand better and use restorative practices. Student leaders will be introduced to their leadership roles and the expectations of their roles. All students will complete a survey in December about restorative practices and their feedback.

Phase seven will be implemented from January to May 2026 following the winter break. Administrators will continue to model restorative practices for students during monthly school rallies and everyday interactions. Administrators will also continue to lead monthly meetings and discussions. Teachers and staff will continue using restorative practices, including circles and language, in daily interactions with students. Staff and teachers will continue to attend monthly meetings to discuss progress and ideas. Staff and teachers will be asked to complete an end-of-year questionnaire about restorative practices and student behaviors. Data collection will continue for student behaviors until the last day of school. Students will also be given a questionnaire on restorative practices, meaningful consequences, and the use of student leader

council for behaviors. Student leaders will continue to have training on restorative practices until the final day of school.

The final phase of the plan will occur from May 2026 onward. With the help of some teachers and staff, the administrators will analyze the data that has been collected during the two-year improvement plan. They will then create a presentation of the data to share with the school, and if positive results are gained, it will be shared with the school community and families. The plan's success will be determined based on the behavior data. If the data shows improvement, the plan will be considered a success.

If positive results occur from the school improvement plan, the school should continue the practice. If continued, the Administrators should discuss the next steps with staff, teachers, and families. Training and meetings should continue to occur for staff and teachers. A team of individuals should oversee the continued implementation and improvement of restorative practices in the school. The team should include administrators, teachers, and other staff. This team should be the go-to for questions, concerns, and resources. The team should also be responsible for educating new teachers in the building. New teachers should be required to complete training before the school year begins and monthly training during the school year. Staff and teachers returning to the school will continue with training at the beginning of the year and quarterly throughout the school year. Students will continue to be included in the practices. Students should be given opportunities to be involved in selecting meaningful consequences and given yearly surveys on how the consequences are going. Students should also be nominated each year for the student leadership council for restorative practices.

If results are inconclusive or do not show positive outcomes, administrators should meet with staff and teachers to see if the school should continue restorative practices or move in a new

direction. If there is an agreement to continue with restorative practices, educators should decide on a new timeline that includes assessment. According to Kervick et al. (2020), with restorative practices, there are many ways to implement restorative practices, and many models for whole-school implementation. The mode chosen might not have been the most appropriate or needed for Huntington. Determination of the intervention's success will depend on the results and thoughts of those involved in the implementation.

Limitations

Some challenges implementing this school improvement plan could be the level of commitment of staff and educators, the buy-in from students, and time. Some of the studies utilized for this plan discussed the importance of attitudes towards restorative practices. To be successful, school staff and educators, especially administrators, must be committed to implementing restorative practice into the school community (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Another challenge could be the buy-in from students. Students need to want to participate in restorative practice just like educators and staff need to for restorative practices to be successful. The last potential challenge is time. Acosta et al. (2019) tested an intervention for over two years. In another study, Gonzalez et al.'s (2020) implementation and intervention occurred over seven years. Time could affect the study's results and decrease the intervention's impact.

Conclusion

Restorative practices using circles can positively impact student behaviors and conflicts and improve the school community. Information gathered in this school improvement plan will be used to improve the behavior and culture at Huntington Elementary in the Lincoln Public School District. The plan above includes a literature review of topics related to restorative

practice and its implementation in schools. The subsequent school improvement plan outlines how Huntington should implement restorative practices in their school.

The results of this study will be impacted by the buy-in of everyone involved in the school improvement plan. Implementation of restorative practices needs to be a school-wide and consistent implementation. Behavior collection also needs to be consistently recorded. Once restorative practices are implemented at Huntington Elementary, the school should see a positive impact on student behaviors, school culture, and school community.

References

- Acosta, J., Chinman, M., Ebener, P., Malone, P. S., Phillips, A., & Wilks, A. (2019). Evaluation of a whole-school change intervention: findings from a two-year cluster-randomized trial of the restorative practices intervention. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *48*(5), 876–890. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01013-2>
- Anyon, Y., Gregory, A., Stone, S., Farrar, J., Jenson, J. M., McQueen, J., Downing, B., Greer, E., & Simmons, J. (2016). Restorative interventions and school discipline sanctions in a large urban school district. *American Educational Research Journal*, *53*(6), 1663–1697. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216675719>
- Brasof, M. (2019). Meeting the discipline challenge: capacity-building youth-adult leadership. *Journal of Educational Change*, *20*(3), 375–398.
- Evans, C. (2021). *Connecting SEL and equity in hybrid learning classrooms*. Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/connecting-sel-and-equity-hybrid-learning-classrooms>
- Dhaliwal, T. K., Daramola, E. J., Alonso, J. D., & Marsh, J. A. (2023). Educators' beliefs and perceptions of implementing restorative practices. *Education and Urban Society*, *55*(1), 88–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131245211048439>
- Garnett, B. R., Kervick, C. T., Moore, M., Ballysingh, T. A., & Smith, L. C. (2022). School staff and youth perspectives of Tier 1 restorative practices classroom circles. *School Psychology Review*, *51*(1), 112–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1795557>
- González Thalia, Sattler, H., & Buth, A. J. (2019). New directions in whole-school restorative justice implementation. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, *36*(3), 207–220. <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21236>

- Gregory, A., Huang, F., & Ward-Seidel, A. R. (2022). Evaluation of the whole school restorative practices project: one-year impact on discipline incidents. *Journal of School Psychology, 95*, 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2022.09.003>
- Hemphill, M. A., Lee, Y., Ragab, S., Rinker, J., & Dyson, O. L. (2022). Developing a pedagogy of restorative physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 41*(2), 194–203. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.2021-0004>
- Joseph, A. A., Hnilica, R., & Hansen, M. (2021). Using restorative practices to reduce racially disproportionate school suspensions: the barriers school leaders should consider during the first year of implementation. *Taboo, 20*(2), 95–119.
- Kehoe, M., Bourke-Taylor, H., & Broderick, D. (2018). Developing student social skills using restorative practices: a new framework called H.E.A.R.T. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal, 21*(1), 189–207. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-017-9402-1>
- Kervick, C. T., Garnett, B., Moore, M., Ballysingh, T. A., & Smith, L. C. (2020). Introducing restorative practices in a diverse elementary school to build community and reduce exclusionary discipline: year one processes, facilitators, and next steps. *School Community Journal, 30*(2), 155–183.
- Lustick, H., Norton, C., & Greene-Rooks, J. H. (2020). Restorative practices for empowerment: a social work lens. *Children & Schools, 42*(2), 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdaa006>
- Lincoln Public Schools. (2022). *Personnel Section*.
<https://docushare.lps.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2769196/2022%202023%20Personnel%20Section.pdf>

Lincoln Public Schools. (2023). *Huntington Elementary School*. Lincoln Public Schools.

<https://huntington.lps.org/about-2/>

Nebraska Department of Education. (2022). *Lincoln Public Schools: District classification*.

<https://nep.education.ne.gov//Districts/Index/55-0001-000?DataYears=20212022>

Norris, H. (2019). The impact of restorative approaches on well-being: an evaluation of happiness and engagement in schools. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 36(3), 221–234.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21242>

Parker, C., & Bickmore, K. (2020). Classroom peace circles: Teachers' professional learning and implementation of restorative dialogue. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 95.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103129>

Payne, A. A., & Welch, K. (2018). The effect of school conditions on the use of restorative justice in schools. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 16(2), 224–240.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204016681414>

Reimer, K. E. (2020). "Here, it's like you don't have to leave the classroom to solve a problem": how restorative justice in schools contributes to students' individual and collective sense of coherence. *Social Justice Research*, 33(4), 406–427.

Schirmer, K. (2021). *Huntington Elementary School*. Lincoln Public Schools.

<https://huntington.lps.org/>

Sellenrick, G. (2023). HUN Tier 1 agenda [Symposium]. Huntington Tier 1 Monthly Meeting, Lincoln, NE.

Skrzypek, C., Bascug, E. W., Ball, A., Kim, W., & Elze, D. (2020). In their own words: student perceptions of restorative practices. *Children & Schools*, 42(4), 245–253.

United States Census Bureau. (2022). *QuickFacts*

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lincolncitynebraska/RHI825222#RHI825222>

2

United States Census Bureau. (2021). *QuickFacts*

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lincolncitynebraska/RHI825222#RHI825222>

2

U.S. News & World Report. (2023). *Huntington Elementary School in Nebraska*. U.S.News.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/nebraska/huntington-elementary-school-216612>

Wang, E. L., & Lee, E. (2019). The use of responsive circles in schools: an exploratory study.

Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 21(3), 181–194.

Watts, B. R., & Robertson, K. (2022). Impact of established restorative practices in an urban high-school environment. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 40(1), 123–140.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21353>

Weaver, J. L., & Swank, J. M. (2020). A case study of the implementation of restorative justice in a middle school. *RMLE Online: Research in Middle Level Education*, 43(4).

Zimmerman- Leizerov, O. & Jerome, J. (2022). *4 ways teachers can support students' emotional well-being*. edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-ways-teachers-can-support-students-emotional-well-being>

[students-emotional-well-being](https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-ways-teachers-can-support-students-emotional-well-being)