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A Case Study Analysis of Elementary Teachers' Attitudes about Student Discipline and the Implementation of Restorative Justice

Kaitlyn M. Spore

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Case Study Analysis of Elementary School Teachers’ Attitudes Regarding Student Discipline and the Implementation of Restorative Justice

By

KAITLYN SPORE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment Of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Seattle Pacific University

April 25, 2018
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Seattle Pacific University

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my fiancé, Brien Lautman. Since we met, I’ve been in a degree or school program, from my Masters at Boston University, to my principal certification, and now my Doctorate. I will never forget sitting with you at brunch at Noble Barton and telling you I wanted to start my Doctorate, while not yet entirely done with my Principal Certification. You stuck by me and supported me through it all. From the weeknights of crock pot meals, and the weekends spent reading and writing, you were always patient and caring. Thank you for not only walking this journey with me, but for being by my side for the adventure of our lives.
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Finally, I would like to thank the students and teachers who inspired this research, and the teachers who volunteered their time in this study. I believe that every child is filled with potential, and as educators it is our responsibility to tap into and grow it. Thank you to the teachers in this study willing to be vulnerable and share their insights, and for your daily commitment to students.
Seattle Pacific University

Abstract

Case Study Analysis of Elementary School Teachers’ Attitudes Regarding Student Discipline and the Implementation of Restorative Justice

By Kaitlyn Spore

Chairperson of Dissertation Committee: Dr. Cher Edwards, School of Education

This study examined the attitudes of elementary school teachers regarding student discipline and the implementation of restorative justice practices. The present research was conducted at a public elementary school in the greater Seattle area. All participants were teachers at the public elementary school, and were purposefully selected based on their years of experience, age, gender, and grade level taught. The study utilized qualitative case study methods to analyze the participants’ attitudes regarding discipline, specifically the use of exclusionary discipline, and their views on implementing restorative justice practices as an alternative to exclusion.

Key Words: restorative justice, school discipline, exclusions, suspensions, mindset, implementation
Chapter One

Introduction

Problem Statement

Racial disproportionality in school discipline is a critical issue permeating the school systems in the United States today (Cowie, Hutson, Jennifer, & Myers, 2008; Elias, 2013; Gregory, Hafen, et al., 2016; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). While this issue is not new, it is of critical concern in our current political and social environment, in which individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds are subject to prejudice and discriminatory practices (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017). In addition, while awareness of this issue has increased in recent years, there have not been significant improvements in practices or data; consequently, racial disproportionality in school discipline has also contributed to other concerning trends such as racial disproportionality in academic achievement and in the juvenile justice system (Morris & Perry, 2016). Racial disproportionality in school discipline has many causes, but the practice of exclusionary discipline is a significant contributor to this growing concern. Exclusionary discipline practices involve the removal of a student from a classroom or school and is a practice occurring at much higher rates for certain student subgroups, including African American and Latino students (Carter et al., 2017; Morris, 2005). Research indicates that the removal of students for misbehavior does not decrease the reoccurrence of behavior. Additionally, exclusion from school places further risks on students including academic failure, dropout, and entry into the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014; Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, 2016). Wong and Lo (2010) argued that when students
are removed from their school and society, they are denied the type of normative experiences that enhance personal development. Thus, by excluding a student from school, the child may not have the opportunity to learn from the experience and grow as an individual. In addition, according to Ahmed and Braithwaite (2006), this social exclusion from school increases students’ association with deviant subcultures, as they attempt to protect their sense of belonging and self-respect.

Due to the failure of exclusionary discipline policies to address and correct misbehavior, and its contribution to the widening racial disproportionality gap in discipline consequences, a new approach to school discipline is warranted. One promising approach to school discipline is the use of restorative justice practices in both proactively preventing misbehavior and responding after misbehavior has occurred. Restorative justice practices require individuals affected by an incident to collaborate to identify the impact on others and to create a plan for repairing harm (Gregory, Hafen, et al., 2016). Duncan (2011) explained that restorative justice practices rely on the fundamental principle that people will be happier and make positive change when people do things with them, rather than to them or for them. Restorative justice approaches include restorative conferencing, circles, and victim-offender mediation programs. In each of these formats, a platform exists for students and administrators to engage in righting the wrongs caused by a student’s behavior, allow victims to express the personal impact of the crime, and ask questions of their offenders (Duncan, 2011). Restorative justice practices provide a space where students who misbehave, and those affected, work together to identify the harm, acknowledge the effects of the harm, and work toward a resolution to remedy the harm (Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014). Through this
process, the victim, offender, and the community participate in a healing process, rather than in a punitive procedure; therefore, this process may increase the chances that harm is repaired, risks reduced, and community built (Duncan, 2011). The elements of restorative justice practices include putting things right for the victim, returning something to the community, addressing the underlying causes of the offense, and ensuring that the offenders have the support needed to fulfill obligations. This process may help develop relationships among students, teachers, and school administrators, teaching students how their actions affect the school and community (Duncan, 2011).

The use of restorative justice practices in school discipline offers an alternative to traditional exclusionary discipline practices and may help address and decrease the racial disproportionality that currently exists (Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016).

While restorative justice practices provide an alternative to exclusion, the implementation of restorative practices requires a shift in teachers’ attitudes regarding behavior and discipline. Teachers’ attitudes regarding student behavior and discipline influence the response to student behavior within the classroom and school community (Pane, Rocco, Miller, & Salmon, 2014). In recent years, school districts and schools have begun to modify existing discipline policies to address equity issues, such as the large proportion of students of color receiving exclusionary discipline actions (Gregory et al., 2016). However, changes to discipline policies to ensure equity are not effective if teachers possess an attitude that is contrary to the underlying assumptions of the new policy (Okonofua et al., 2016). For example, changing to a zero-suspension policy to address racial disproportionality in discipline outcomes may not be effective if teachers’ attitudes do not align to the underlying assumptions of this policy. These underlying
assumptions include the belief that individuals should have the opportunity to talk through the issue and solve the problem. The key to changing discipline policies may lie in understanding and changing teachers’ attitudes regarding student behavior and discipline (Elias, 2013).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the attitudes of elementary school teachers in regard to student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice. Through this review and description, the researcher aimed to determine if certain themes emerged that would aid an administrator as restorative responses are implemented in their school. This study presented findings and themes from qualitative interviews with elementary school teachers aimed to ascertain their attitudes regarding student behavior and discipline practices. Furthermore, it provided insight on teachers’ attitudes and how understanding teachers’ current beliefs impacts the effectiveness of school discipline policies and responses to student behavior.

**Research Questions**

The first research question examined the attitudes of elementary school teachers in terms of student behavior and the use of exclusionary discipline to address student misbehavior. The second research question sought to understand the teachers’ beliefs about restorative justice and identify information that may assist administrators seeking to implement restorative justice practices as an alternative to exclusionary discipline practices.

The first research question was as follows: What themes exist within elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding student behavior and the use of exclusionary
discipline to address student misbehavior? The second research question was as follows: What themes exist within elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding the use of restorative justice as an alternative to exclusionary discipline, and how might these themes provide insight for an administrator seeking to implement restorative justice practices within their school?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout the study: exclusionary discipline, racial disproportionality, and restorative justice. The terms are defined below.

- **Exclusionary Discipline**: A type of discipline consequence that removes the student from the classroom or school setting. Exclusions may include removal from class, detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion.

- **Racial Disproportionality**: The discrepancy between the rates of discipline consequences that racial minorities experience to their overall proportion of the student population. The rate of disciplinary offenses is much larger than the percentage of the student population that these students make up. African American and Latino students, while a minority in the total student population, make up a majority of the discipline occurrences.

- **Restorative Justice**: Practices that aim to restore relationships after harm has occurred from an individual’s actions. These practices bring together the victims and the offenders through structured processes including circles, conferences, and community meetings.

**Organization of the Study**
This study is organized into five distinct chapters. Chapter One includes an introduction to the problem of exclusionary discipline and the purpose of the study. Chapter Two includes a review of literature describing exclusionary discipline, theoretical constructs of restorative justice, and restorative justice implementation in practice. Chapter Three contains the methodology used for this study to most effectively address the research questions. Chapter Four outlines the findings of the study and themes that emerged through interviews of multiple elementary school teachers. Chapter Five provides an analysis of the data and attempts to address the answers to the research questions based on the data collected.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

The Problem: Exclusionary Discipline

Traditional school discipline often involves the use of exclusionary measures as a consequence for student misbehavior (Curran, 2016; Vanderhaar, Munoz, & Petrosko, 2014). When a student’s behavior contradicts the school or teacher’s code of conduct or set expectations, the student often receives a consequence for the behavior. An exclusionary discipline consequence is a type of consequence that removes the student from the classroom, and includes detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). School policies exist that describe which misbehaviors could result in an exclusionary consequence. However, many schools and administrators have discretion over which consequences to assign and the severity of the consequence (Anyon et al., 2014). While traditional discipline and exclusionary practices are common practice, research suggests that these practices not only do little to deter subsequent misbehavior, they also induce harmful risks on students who receive them (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory et al., 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016; Pane et al., 2014).

Exclusionary discipline policies aim to reduce the level of behavior incidents within a school, with the hope of ultimately providing safer schools overall. The beliefs that exclusion will help create safer schools rely on the assumption that when students are excluded from school, they will learn from their misbehavior and return with a greater sense of accountability and desire to behave appropriately (Mergler et al., 2014). Another assumption in exclusionary discipline is that by removing the offending student
from the school or classroom, the student’s lack of presence will remove the danger or threat they posed (Cowie et al., 2008). However, no evidence exists that exclusionary policies lead to safer schools (Fabelo et al., 2011). According to Ahmed and Braithwaite (2006), this social exclusion from school increases students’ association with deviant subcultures as an attempt to protect their sense of belonging and self-respect. This association with deviant subcultures may also help explain the correlation between exclusion from school and contact with the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory, Hafen, et al., 2016). Finally, when the offender is removed based on an assumption that removing the student removes the problem, in reality, the problem is simply relocated in time and place and often exacerbated in the process (Morrison, 2006).

The ramifications for students who have received exclusionary discipline are severe, often impacting their current and future success in both school and life. Traditional discipline responses at schools, including reprimands, detentions, suspensions, or expulsions aim to ostracize and exclude individuals from the school community (Cowie et al., 2008). This behavior can initiate a harmful and escalating pattern of negative student-adult interactions. Additionally, it can contribute to students’ disinvestment from school, culminating in their dropping out of school altogether (Gregory et al., 2014). Removal of a student from the classroom results in segregation and isolation from both education and social opportunities (Pane et al., 2014) and does not provide a strong foundation for the building of trusting relationships with teachers or peers. Without trusting relationships, individuals lose their sense of belonging and investment in school, which can also impact how they behave while in the school building (Pane et al., 2014). Wong and Lo (2010) argued that when students are removed
from their school and society, they are denied the type of normative experiences that enhance personal development.

Student academic success and achievement is also negatively impacted when students are excluded from school for behavioral consequences (Morris & Perry, 2016; Mullet, 2014). A primary concern is that when students are excluded from the classroom or school, they miss critical academic instruction, making it easy to fall behind and struggle with content (Mullet, 2014). Morris and Perry (2016) argued that the effects of suspension are long lasting, setting into motion a trajectory of poor performance that continues in subsequent years, even if a student is not suspended again. As a potential result of falling behind academically, excluded students also struggle with remaining in school and graduating from high school (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2015). This trajectory is striking, as each suspension that a student receives as a disciplinary consequence decreases the student’s chances of graduating from high school by an additional twenty percent, according to Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2015). Beyond high school, the effect of exclusion may also have long-term effects for students, as suspensions are highly associated with entry into the juvenile and criminal justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gibson, Wilson, Haight, Kayama, & Marshall, 2014).

Exclusionary discipline practices begin at the classroom level and continue to the administrative level within a school. At the classroom level, teachers are provided with much discretion over utilizing exclusion or removing a student from the classroom due to the student’s behavior. A teacher’s decision to refer students for punishment can mean that they are removed from the classroom, thus beginning the process of exclusion (Elias, 2013). The level of discretion that teachers have in managing student behavior differs
among schools, but it is common for teachers to have a high degree of discretion in defining inappropriate behaviors, and how they address these behaviors within their classroom (Skiba et al., 2011). In addition, misconduct categories like defiance and disrespect allow for subjectivity to a greater extent than other behaviors like weapon or drug possession (Smolkowski et al., 2016). Administrators have the power to decide which consequences students receive and are the primary decisionmakers on whether to suspend or expel a student based on their misconduct (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011).

While some schools have discipline policies in place, researchers have found that the consequences provided to students still vary widely for similar behaviors (Skiba et al., 2011).

Exclusionary practices are often experienced in higher numbers within certain subgroups, especially for African American and Latino students (Cowie et al., 2008; Gregory et al., 2016; Smolkowski et al., 2016). In the United States, African American students alone account for forty-six percent of students suspended more than once, yet they only constitute eighteen percent of the population of students in the United States (Elias, 2013). Other factors beyond race may also contribute to the racial differences seen in discipline data; however, these disparities in discipline outcomes remain even after controlling for confounding variables such as poverty, disability, gender, previous academic achievement, school composition, and neighborhood context (Fabelo et al., 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014).

A possible leading contributor to the racial disproportionality in school discipline is the subjective nature of how behavior is interpreted by teachers and administrators. Researchers have found that while White students are more likely to be referred for
objective offenses, Black children are more likely to be referred for subjective offenses
(Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016). This is problematic as people tend to
stereotype to fill in gaps in their understanding or to guide their decisions; therefore, the
interpretation of behavior by teachers may be influenced by teachers’ own biases
regarding certain subgroups of students (Okonofua et al., 2016). Teachers may view
certain disruptive behaviors as challenges to their authority when students of color exhibit
them within their classrooms (Anyon et al., 2014).

Racial disproportionality in discipline consequences is apparent at both the
teacher and administrator levels within schools. At the teacher-level, African American
students are reprimanded within the classroom and given office referrals for behavior
within the classroom at a higher rate than their white peers (Morris & Perry, 2016). At
the administrator-level, racial discrepancies in punishment exist even for similar offenses
(Morris, 2005). African American, Latino, and Multiracial students are often punished
more harshly than their white peers for the same offenses (Anyon et al., 2014). African
American students are approximately three times as likely as white students to be
suspended for the same offense (Fabelo et al., 2011; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, &
Bachman, 2008). In addition, the odds of an African American student receiving an out-
of-school suspension is nearly two times that of a white student, with African American
males being three and a half times more likely to be suspended (Finn & Servoss, 2013).
This pattern persists at all levels of the public school system.

The pattern of racial disproportionality in school discipline is an important issue
to address and remedy. Exclusionary discipline practices, especially those that are in
response to subjective behavior misconduct, may be contributing to this racial
discrepancy (Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016). However, if the chain of events that often begins when a student is removed from the classroom for perceived misbehavior and culminates in suspension can be disrupted, there is potential to narrow the entrenched racial discipline gap (Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen, & Pianta, 2014). One potential way to disrupt this chain of events leading to exclusion and contributing to the racial discipline gap is the use of restorative practices as an alternative in responding to misconduct within the school (Anyon et al., 2014; Okonofua et al., 2016).

**Theoretical Constructs**

An alternative to exclusionary discipline policies that may address both the concerns of exclusion and the racial disproportionality that currently exists in school discipline is the adoption of restorative justice practices (Anyon et al., 2014; Okonofua et al., 2016). Restorative justice practices require individuals affected by an incident to collaborate to identify the impact on others and to create a plan for repairing harm (Gregory et al., 2016). Restorative justice approaches include restorative conferencing, circles, and victim-offender mediation programs (Wachtel, Costello, & Wachtel, 2009). These concepts will be described later in this chapter. In each of these formats, a platform is created for students and administrators to engage in righting the wrongs caused by students’ behavior and victims can express the impact the incident has had on their lives and to ask questions of their offenders (Duncan, 2011).

Restorative justice practice draws its roots from the traditions of Maori native people in New Zealand. The Maori engage in conflict resolution meetings, which acknowledge the presence and dignity of all in attendance and follow a process which includes placing emphasis on portraying the positive, acknowledging that the problem,
not the person, is the issue, accepting personal responsibility, and fostering restoration (Wearmouth, McKinney, & Glynn, 2007). The focus in these meetings is to make things right between everyone involved and shifts the focus from the individual to the whole community. In the Maori tradition, the final resolution of conflict must be achieved in ways which respect and restore an individual’s autonomy, integrity, self-esteem, and standing within the group to work together as a community and determine resolution steps that meet this criterion within the community (Wearmouth et al., 2007).

**Reintegrative shaming theory.** Restorative justice theory was first developed in the criminal justice system and draws its foundation from Braithwaite’s reintegrative shaming theory (Gregory et al., 2011). Braithwaite’s (1989) reintegrative shaming theory proposes that following a negative encounter or situation, shaming toward the offender naturally occurs. There are two types of shaming that may occur: stigmatizing shaming or reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989). Stigmatizing shaming occurs when no effort is made to reconcile the offender with the community and the offender “is outcast and her deviance is allowed to become a master status” (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 101). Reintegrative shaming occurs when effort is made to reconcile the offender with the community and where shaming “labels the act as evil while striving to preserve the identity of the offender as essentially good” (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 100). Braithwaite’s (1989) theory indicates that stigmatizing shaming makes criminal subculture more attractive because individuals are cut off from other groups of support, such as their families or neighbors. In contrast, reintegrative shaming communicates disapproval of the act while not rejecting the individual from the community (Braithwaite, 1989). This
theory also relies on the idea that individuals are interdependent with others in their communities (Braithwaite, 1989).

**Restorative Justice Theory**

Following from Braithwaite’s (1989) reintegrative shaming theory, which was largely intended for the criminal justice system, a new theory emerged called restorative justice theory (McCold & Wachtel, 2002). Restorative justice theory holds broader application in education systems and communities as it was intended for application beyond just the criminal justice system. McCold and Wachtel (2002) developed a theory of restorative justice that encompasses a Social Discipline Window, stakeholder roles, and restorative practices typology. The Social Discipline Window is the combination of the two continuums of control and support, resulting in four distinct approaches to responding to behavior: punitive, permissive, neglectful, and restorative (McCold & Wachtel, 2002). Punitive responses are those with high control and low support, neglectful responses are those with low control and low support, permissive responses are those with low control and high support, and restorative responses are those with high control and high support (McCold & Wachtel, 2002) (see Figure 1 below). These stances are also described by the words not (neglectful), for (permissive), to (punitive), and with (restorative) (McCold & Wachtel, 2002). Stakeholder roles distinguish between primary stakeholders, such as victims, offenders, and families, and secondary stakeholders, such as neighbors and officials (McCold & Wachtel, 2002). The primary stakeholders experience direct harm, have specific needs for restoration, and require an active response in the restoration process. Secondary stakeholders experience vicarious harm, have
aggregate needs for restoration, and require a supportive response in the restoration process (McCold & Wachtel, 2002).


The final component of restorative justice theory is the typology, which indicates that the primary stakeholders are victims, offenders, and their communities of care, and that the degree to which all three are involved in “meaningful emotional exchange and decision-making” (McCold & Wachtel, 2002, p. 116) is the degree to which the encounter can be restorative. The participation of all three direct stakeholders is required in order to meet everyone’s needs (McCold & Wachtel, 2002).

Restorative practices in schools follow the same principles and patterns demonstrated by restorative justice theory. These practices in schools aim to both prevent behavior incidents before they occur and to intervene after an incident has occurred (Gregory et al., 2016). One preventative practice includes engaging in a
proactive circle, where students participate in a structured group discussion while sitting in a circle (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010). Another strategy is to use affective statements and questions, in which individuals are given the opportunity to share their emotional reactions to both positive and negative events (Wachtel et al., 2009). These preventative strategies may be helpful in building positive relationships, both between teachers and students and among students, and it is this strengthening of relationships that supports the building of a supportive and equitable school climate that does not rely on exclusionary or punitive responses to discipline (Gregory et al., 2011). In addition to the preventative practices, restorative practices aim to resolve conflict and repair harm after an incident has occurred (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016). One strategy is to conduct a restorative circle where the classroom discusses an incident with the hope of restoring community. In this practice, students share feelings, identify who has been affected, and develop a plan to repair the harm and prevent future conflict (Costello et al., 2010). Restorative conferences are used for more egregious incidents and involve utilizing a structured and scripted meeting protocol (Wachtel, Costello, & Wachtel, 2009). These conferences focus both on holding the individual accountable for his/her actions, but also reintegrating him/her back into the classroom community (Wachtel, Costello, & Wachtel, 2009).

Restorative justice structures emphasize the restoration of harmony not only between the victim and the offender, but also with the rest of the community (Wearmouth et al., 2007). The ownership of behavior that is required in restorative practices causes individuals to understand how their behavior directly affects their peers, the learning environment, and the school community (Mergler et al., 2014). The premise is that in
addition to understanding their impact on the community, individuals are also able to reintegrate into the school and classroom community as a valuable, contributing member (Mullet, 2014). These practices require putting things right for the victim, returning something to the community, addressing the underlying causes of the offense, and ensuring that the individual has the support needed to meet obligations; consequently, this process may help develop relationships among students and school administrators, teaching students how their actions affect the school and community (Duncan, 2011). According to DeWitt and DeWitt (2012), this process of healing and relationship building has the potential to create a culture of acceptance and encouragement that allows the incident to become a learning experience for everyone involved.

**Empirical Research**

**Impact of Restorative Practices**

One of the primary forms of empirical evidence for restorative justice originates from the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) and the work of two researchers, Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel. McCold and Wachtel began implementation of restorative practices at the Community Service Foundation Buxmont Academies, eight alternative school and day treatment programs for high-risk and delinquent youth (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007). These academies operated within a fully implemented restorative program, including both preventative and reactive restorative practices such as circles and conferencing. In 1999, McCold and Wachtel began a long-term study to evaluate the effectiveness of restorative programs for students enrolled in these programs, aiming to understand how restorative programs impacted the youth’s pro-social values, self-esteem, and reoffending behavior (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007).
The findings of the study indicated that experiencing restorative practices was associated with increased positive social values and self-esteem, and decreased reoffending behaviors (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007). The study utilized pre- and post-interviews with students upon their entry and exit at Buxmont Academies, and found an increase in social values from entry to exit and an increase in self-esteem from entry to exit. Additionally, the researchers found that the longer the time the individual spent in the program, the greater the reduction in reoffending upon exit. The ideal amount of time to decrease reoffending behavior was found to be six months, producing a reduction in offending rate by two-thirds (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007). This reduction in reoffending also held true two years after exiting the program (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007).

This study had two main limitations, including the fact that the researchers were also the founders of the school and restorative program, and the lack of generalizability to general school populations given the alternative nature of the Buxmont schools. Wachtel and McCold were two of the primary founders of restorative justice theory and the International Institute for Restorative Practices. This relationship calls into question the validity of the research results as their positions may have influenced their research and methodology. Additionally, this research was conducted in an alternative school setting with highly trained restorative educators and counselors. This setting does not reflect the nature of most public schools in the country, both in terms of student population and teacher training. Further research is needed on the evaluation of restorative practices on student attitudes and reoffending in the public school setting.

A study conducted by Anyon and colleagues (2016) focused on evaluating the effects of restorative practices on discipline referrals and whether students from
disadvantaged backgrounds had an equitable opportunity to participate in restorative practices. The researchers aimed to discover if a student’s participation in restorative practices during the first semester of school was associated with lower odds of discipline referrals in the second semester, and if the association between restorative practices and discipline incidents held for students of different racial backgrounds (Anyon et al., 2016). The study was conducted in the Denver Public Schools, which adopted a discipline policy to incorporate more alternative forms of discipline beyond suspension. Denver Public Schools provided optional training for administrators, teachers, and school staff on restorative practices, and included in their discipline policy a strong recommendation for restorative practices to be utilized for each discipline infraction (Anyon et al., 2016). The students in the study were all enrolled K-12 students (n = 9,921) in all district schools (n = 180) who had been issued one or more discipline referrals in the 2012-2013 school year (Anyon et al., 2016). Researchers utilized discipline records to complete multilevel logistic regression methods to estimate the relationships between student socio-demographic characteristics, participation in restorative practices in semester one, and discipline outcomes in semester two (Anyon et al., 2016).

Anyon’s (2016) findings indicated positive results in utilizing restorative practices in preventing future discipline occurrences. Individuals who participated in restorative justice practices in their first semester had lower odds of receiving office discipline referrals (OR .21, p < .001) and suspensions (OR .07, p < .001) in their second semester compared to first semester. In addition, students from disadvantaged populations, such as Black, Latino, male, and special education students, had similar, equitable rates of participation in restorative practices with their peers (Anyon et al., 2016). Of note, while
these individuals had equitable participation in restorative practices, the gap between Black and White students receiving suspensions remained (Anyon et al., 2016).

While this study provided a lens from a comprehensive, district perspective, the study did not provide much empirical evidence on the longevity of impact for restorative practices or implementation quality. The study was narrow, within a school year, and did not determine if restorative practices predicted a long-term impact on student behavior beyond the school year. Additionally, the study did not provide evaluation on the level of implementation or teacher and student perceptions of restorative justice practices. The nature of the discipline policy and training as optional raises concern over the consistency of practices across the district and the quality of what was provided to students.

A further study on restorative justice practices in schools aimed to also incorporate racial disproportionality in the evaluation of restorative practices for school discipline. Gregory, Clawson, Davis, and Gerewitz (2016) conducted a study at two high schools on the East Coast during their first year of implementation of restorative justice practices. The aim was to determine if greater implementation of restorative justice practices was associated with higher levels of student-to-teacher respect and fewer defiance discipline referrals, and if the effect held across different racial and ethnic groups (Gregory, Clawson et al., 2016). The study included twenty-nine classroom teachers and four hundred and twelve students and involved both teachers and students self-reporting on the level of implementation of restorative practices within their classroom. Students also self-reported the quality of their student-teacher relationships using the Belmont, Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell “Teacher Respect Scale” (Gregory, Clawson, et al., 2016). In addition, discipline referrals were analyzed to determine both
the number and type of offenses before and after implementation. Each component of the
data was disaggregated by racial group using students’ self-reported race (Gregory et al.,
2016).

Gregory et al.’s (2016) findings indicated that student-reported implementation
was related to both student-teacher relationships and the number of discipline referrals.
Higher student-reported implementation was associated with greater teacher respect \((r = .58, p < .01)\) and fewer referrals for Latino and African American students \((r = -.45, p < .05)\). Higher student-reported implementation was also associated with fewer Asian and
White referrals, but this association was not at the established level for significance \((r = -.36, p > .10)\). An interesting finding in the study was that teacher-reported
implementation was not related to student-reported implementation, and lacked statistical
significance with changes in student-teacher relationships or the number of discipline
referrals (Gregory et al., 2016).

While Gregory et al. (2016) provided important findings related to student
perceptions of restorative justice implementation and suggests the potential for restorative
practices to improve student-teacher relationships and decrease referrals, the
misalignment in teacher and student reports of restorative implementation needs to be
investigated further. One weakness in the study’s structure that may have resulted in this
discrepancy was the time frame in which teachers had been trained on restorative
practices and the minimal amounts of support and coaching available to them (Gregory et
al., 2016). The study did not address teachers’ willingness or belief in restorative
practices, which may also be an important component for further study.

**Implementation of Restorative Practices in Schools**
A study conducted by Bevington (2015) aimed to better understand the implementation and impact of restorative practices from the perspective of staff members. The study was a qualitative case study, in which the researcher utilized the practice of appreciative inquiry to gain insight into staff members’ perspectives regarding the implementation of restorative practices within their school. The purpose of the study was to explore “in-depth people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (Bevington, 2015, p. 107) of restorative practices in their school. Bevington (2015) conducted the research within one primary school in London, which consisted of 355 students. The school was described as a highly diverse school, with 30% of the students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and 66% of students with English as a second language (Bevington, 2015). This school was chosen because it had a history of engagement with restorative practices, and staff could speak to both restorative justice practices and its implementation.

The researcher used the process of appreciative inquiry, with the four phases of inquiry, imagination, innovation, and implementation (Bevington, 2015). The sample size was six, with staff members selected in order to include a range of perspectives in terms of their role in the school. In the inquiry stage of appreciative inquiry, the researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews and then completed a three-stage coding process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Bevington, 2015).

Bevington’s (2015) findings indicated an importance in having congruent values, practices, and outcomes among individuals within the school community. Staff members indicated that restorative practices provided an alternative way of dealing with conflict
and emotions, and acknowledged that “emotions are real, should be recognized, and known how to be dealt with” (Bevington, 2015 p. 109). This was true for both students and adults and participants indicated that restorative practices helped adults be more authentic and honest. In terms of congruence, the findings indicated a strong need for the values of the school to be aligned with the values of restorative justice. With an aligned values system throughout the school, staff are able to use their judgement to respond to conflict in similar ways (Bevington, 2015). Staff indicated that implementation was most effective if there was a core of highly skilled staff, a shared bank of resources and ideas for staff to draw upon, and professional development focused on emotional intelligence (Bevington, 2015). The primary concern regarding implementation was the “inability or unwillingness” (Bevington, 2015, p. 114) of certain staff members to engage with restorative practices, posing significant challenge for school-wide implementation of restorative practices.

The study illuminated the need for congruence of values, and pointed to some potential challenges in implementing restorative practices that others may draw upon (Bevington, 2015). While this study provided insight into the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions of select staff within a school implementing restorative practices, the case study nature of the study does not allow for broad generalizability. In addition, the researcher provided little insight into the selection of staff members for the study and little detail into the level of exposure to restorative practices the school had received. Further explanation and rationale for both of these areas would be beneficial for others conducting similar studies.
A case study research methodology was also utilized to explore the implementation of restorative practices within an Ontario public school. The purpose of the research study was to discover and analyze how restorative practices were experienced and implemented by teachers and administrators, with a focus on their perceptions of restorative practices as a philosophy, its implementation, and their roles in enacting it within their school (Reimer, 2011). The selected school was identified through a conversation the researcher had with a school board member, in which the member indicated this school as a model for restorative practices within the district (Reimer, 2011). The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews with four participants, and selected the participants through voluntary response to an invitation sent to the whole school. In addition to interviews, the researcher also analyzed documents provided by the school board in order to gain an understanding of the regional context of the school and restorative practices within the district (Reimer, 2011).

In analyzing the data, Reimer (2011) used a three-stage coding process and theming strategies. The coding consisted of making the text manageable, hearing what was said, and developing theory (Reimer, 2011). The researcher identified repeating ideas, and reduced the original 33 ideas into 15 theme groups, which were reduced to four constructs. The four constructs were identified as constructing personal understanding of restorative justice, facilitating adoption of new theories, complicating contextual factors of structure and culture, and inconsistent support from gatekeepers of change (Reimer, 2011). The challenges with implementation included differing definitions of restorative practices, lack of time, the need for a strong school community, and the need for strong administrative leadership. An alignment to restorative practice
values, which were identified as contradictory to modern justice system values, was also mentioned by staff members (Reimer, 2011). Additionally, the need for strong training for teachers to increase their confidence in using restorative practices was identified for successful implementation (Reimer, 2011).

While this study was a qualitative case study, and thus no broad generalizations can be drawn, it still provides important considerations for schools implementing restorative practices. Of primary consideration, Reimer (2011) found that implementation for restorative practices requires personal commitment to the values of restorative justice, and a strong system with structures and training in place for staff members. Beyond the lack of generalizability, another limitation of the study was the selection of staff members who participated in the interviews. After requesting participation from all staff members, only four individuals responded with a willingness to be interviewed. This could indicate that these four staff members had strong opinions regarding restorative practices, and therefore may not reflect the opinions and beliefs of the rest of the school staff.

Research conducted by Vaandering (2014) also utilized a case study qualitative approach to increase understanding of the implementation of restorative practices within two schools in Ontario. The purpose of this study was to explore the voices of teachers and principals regarding the philosophy of restorative justice, and how this understanding could improve implementation and sustainability of restorative practices in schools (Vaandering, 2014). Two schools were selected based on size and experience with restorative practices. Both schools had implemented restorative practices three years prior, allowing staff members to have adequate perspective on implementation. At each
school, about 15 staff members volunteered to participate in the study, and the researcher selected two at each school based on their level of training and grade level representation (Vaanndering, 2014).

This case study utilized data in the form of interviews and observations. The researcher interviewed each participant and conducted regular observations of their practice over the course of six weeks. After collecting the data, the researcher coded and themed the transcripts and observation notes. Key questions that the researcher used while coding and theming included addressing the personal definitions of restorative practices, the frames of implementation, and identifying the interests served (Vaanndering, 2014).

The findings from this study suggested that teachers implementing restorative practices often fell into two categories: those who situated restorative justice into a discourse of an engagement pedagogy and those that situated it into a discourse of behavior and control (Vaanndering, 2014). Those within an engagement pedagogy held a view of the child as worthy, the teacher’s role as one of support, and a focus on both the present and future for children. Those within a control discourse held a view of the child as valuable if they complied with social norms and viewed the role of the teacher as one of manager and expert (Vaanndering, 2014). Teachers within the control discourse also indicated a dismissal of restorative practices if they believed themselves to have management skills already in place. The researcher described these two viewpoints as one that “reinforces punitive, managerial structures” and one that “nurtures relationship-based cultures” (Vaanndering, 2014, p. 71).
Based on the findings from this study, the researcher suggested that implementation of restorative practices must address the structural, personal, and professional influences and beliefs of educators (Vaandering, 2014). One downfall of implementation comes when schools or districts “ignore the impact of personal lives on understanding change, and expect that a professional development experience will result in a comprehensive change for all” (Vaandering, 2014, p. 69). Vaandering (2014) suggested that implementation should include a critical reflection on core values of staff members and how they align with the principles and values of restorative practices. Without this understanding, the findings of this study indicated that power relationships underlying the original punitive, managerial structures will remain in the school setting (Vaandering, 2014).

**Summary**

Racial disproportionality in school discipline is a critical issue in education today (Skiba et al., 2002). Racial minorities receive school disciplinary consequences at a much higher level than their white peers, and often receive much sterner consequences for similar misconduct (Gregory et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002). While racial disproportionality in school discipline has many causes, the practice of exclusionary discipline is a significant contributor to this growing concern. Research indicates that the removal of students for misbehavior does not decrease the reoccurrence of behavior. Additionally, exclusion from school places additional risks on students including academic failure, dropout, and entry into the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gibson et al., 2014). In addition, these exclusionary practices have many negative consequences for the students that receive them (Curran, 2016). Due to these concerns
and the contribution that exclusionary discipline has on racial disproportionality in discipline, alternative approaches may be warranted.

An alternative approach to school discipline that may improve the racial discrepancy is the use of restorative justice practices in both proactively preventing misbehavior and responding after misbehavior has occurred. Restorative practices may provide an avenue for the building of strong relationships between teachers and students (Gregory et al., 2016). The building of strong relationships may counteract or alleviate potential bias that contributes to the decisions teachers and administrators make when referring students and providing disciplinary consequences (Smolkowski et al., 2016). Restorative practices may also have long-term effects for students, schools, and their communities. At the classroom level, when teachers utilize restorative responses to behavior, and rely less on exclusion from the classroom, students spend more time in the classroom and are more likely to complete their education (Anyon et al., 2016).

Restorative practices may serve as an alternative to traditional exclusionary discipline policies. The processes of allowing the offender to restore, reconcile, and make restitution are not present with traditional responses to behavior (Mullet, 2014). Restorative justice processes seek to repair the harm done to victims by those who have inflicted it by approaching the situation with an attitude of mindfulness, responsibility, empowerment, and inclusion (Clear, 2005). The concept of empowerment is applicable to both the victim and the offender in these situations. Varnham (2005) argued that the rationale behind restoration is that it empowers students to work out differences constructively and to work toward solutions. In working toward solutions and resolving the conflict, the offender may be able to abandon any rationalizations they may have that
their behavior was acceptable, thus making a more profound impact on their future behavior (Duncan, 2011). Initial empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of restorative practices may increase positive student and teacher relationships, decrease the rate of reoccurring offenses, and increase students’ attitudes positively (Anyon et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016; Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007). Initial qualitative research indicates implementation of restorative practices is complex, and requires a shift in policy and mindsets regarding discipline (Bevington, 2015; Reimer, 2011; Vaandering, 2014). The empirical evidence, though limited, is promising. Certainly, further research is warranted.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology used to address the research questions regarding elementary school teachers’ attitudes about student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice. Included in this chapter is the research design, participant and sampling procedures, measures addressing validity and reliability, and the data collection and analysis processes. Finally, this chapter addresses the limitations of the research design and study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the attitudes of elementary school teachers in regard to student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice. Through exploration and description, the researcher aimed to determine if certain themes emerged that provided support of administrators’ implementation of restorative responses. The first research question was developed to examine the attitudes of elementary school teachers in terms of student behavior and the use of exclusionary discipline to address student misbehavior. The second research question was created to seek understanding regarding the teachers’ attitudes about restorative justice and to identify information that may assist an administrator seeking to implement restorative justice practices as an alternative to exclusionary discipline practices. The research questions are as follows:
Research Question 1: What themes exist within elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding student behavior and the use of exclusionary discipline to address student misbehavior?

Research Question 2: What themes exist within elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding the use of restorative justice as an alternative to exclusionary discipline, and how might these themes provide insight for an administrator seeking to implement restorative justice practices within their school?

Research Design

The research design utilized for this study was a qualitative case study research design (Creswell, 2016). Qualitative research is research that “makes the world visible, in which researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 p. 3). Creswell (2016) expands on this definition by adding that the final report “includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (p. 44).

One form of qualitative research is case study research (Creswell, 2016). Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). In this type of qualitative design, the researcher explores a real-life, bounded system through detailed, in-depth data collection and reports a description and themes (Creswell, 2016). There are numerous types of case study designs that can be utilized depending on the number of groups analyzed and the purpose of the analysis (Creswell, 2016). For this research, a single instrumental case study design was selected.
A single instrumental case study is one in which the researcher identifies an issue and selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue (Stake, 1995). The identified issue in this case is the attitudes of teachers regarding student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice, and the bounded case utilized is one elementary school within a public school district. The purpose of utilizing a descriptive case study was to understand further, via interviews, the perspectives of elementary school teachers regarding student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice, and to identify themes that may aid an administrator seeking to implement restorative practices within their school. As this is a qualitative research design, there were no independent and dependent variables.

**Participants**

The participants in this research study were current elementary (K-6th grade) teachers from one elementary school in a public school district in the greater Seattle area. The researcher included seven participants in the study, as this meets Creswell’s (2016) minimum recommendation of a sample size of 4-5 participants for case study research. Participants selected for the study represented a diverse population of teachers based on gender, age, grade level position, and years of teaching experience.

**Sampling Process**

The researcher identified a public school district in the greater Seattle area that has drawn attention in the previous three years for their focus on eliminating school suspensions and exclusions. The media attention this district has received has been both positive, in terms of reducing suspensions, and critical, in terms of teachers reporting feeling unsafe and unsupported with student discipline. Within this district, the researcher identified one elementary school in which to conduct the study. This
elementary school was chosen due to its size, location, student diversity, staff diversity, and exposure to and beginning knowledge of restorative justice practices. The school is a medium-sized school, with a student population of 300. It is in the greater Seattle area, and is an identified Title 1 school, with 85% of the student population receiving free or reduced-price lunch. The student population is diverse, with students of Hispanic, Asian, African American, Pacific Islander, and White racial backgrounds. The staff within the school are diverse in terms of number of years of teaching experience, age, and gender. Finally, the school has begun to explore the idea of restorative justice, but has not adopted or implemented this practice. This exposure allowed interview participants to have a general understanding of restorative justice concepts and a beginning development of their own beliefs regarding the practice and its implementation within an elementary school.

To identify participants within the elementary school, the researcher first conducted an informal interview with the school principal. This interview helped to identify teachers in the school according to gender, age, grade level position, and years of teaching experience. The researcher also asked the principal to help identify teachers whom she believed would be willing to participate in an interview and those with potentially diverse mindsets and opinions on student discipline and the use of restorative justice. The researcher utilized the sampling strategy of maximum variation sampling, in which diverse individuals were selected based on identified criteria in order to include and describe multiple perspectives about the case (Creswell, 2016). The identified criteria were gender, age, grade level position, and years of teaching experience.
The researcher then contacted the identified potential participants through an email invitation. The email provided an initial description of the study and invited voluntary participation from teachers. Interested teachers were asked to email the researcher with their information by a pre-determined deadline. The researcher selected participants from those who expressed interest to ensure a diverse sample of teachers based on the identified criteria of gender, age, grade level position, and years of teaching experience. After the participants were selected, the researcher contacted each participant to set up an appointment for an interview.

**Measure**

The data collection measure in this study was interviews. The researcher determined a semi-structured interview one-on-one with each participant as the most appropriate interview type. Interview questions were developed around the ideas of student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice. All interview questions were developed based on information from the literature review and findings from other studies within the area of student discipline and implementation of restorative justice practices.

Two important considerations in any research study is the reliability and validity of the research. Reliability within a case study is defined as “the consistency and repeatability of the research procedures” (Yin, 2014, p. 240). To address reliability, the participants received information that explained the study, the interview questions, the interview protocol, and their scheduled date and time in advance of the interview. Consistency was controlled through the structure of the interview, and in asking exactly the same questions in an identical order for each participant.
Validity within a case study is defined as “an attempt to address the accuracy of the findings” (Creswell, 2016, p. 249). To address validity within this study, a pilot test was used to refine the interview questions. Researchers recommend the use of a pilot test to refine and develop interview questions and adapt original plans (Creswell, 2016; Sampson, 2004; Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2016), the pilot test cases are selected based on convenience, access, and geographic proximity (p. 165). Following this protocol, the researcher identified pilot test teachers within her current school. The researcher provided the interview questions in advance to the pilot test teachers and noted their answers and any clarifications or questions that arose. Based on the pilot test phase, the interview questions were revised. Additionally, definitions of terminology used in the interview questions were provided to participants at the start of each interview and participants viewed their completed interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. Finally, the transcripts were reviewed independently by two second party researchers trained in qualitative research coding and theming practices to establish interrater reliability.

**Data Collection**

Upon selection of the participants, the researcher contacted each participant to schedule an appointment for an initial interview. Interviews are defined as a data collection method in which an interviewer asks an interviewee questions (Vogt & Johnson, 2016). The initial interview lasted approximately one hour and followed specific questions determined by the researcher. Creswell (2016) recommends designing an interview protocol that is “a form about four to five pages in length, with approximately five to seven open-ended questions” (p. 164). Additionally, an interview protocol is a list of questions and instructions that is used as a guide when interviewing
respondents (Vogt & Johnson, 2016). The researcher asked the same questions of each participant, but also asked additional follow-up questions as needed to ensure thorough answers on each question. With permission from each participant, the researcher recorded each interview and took brief notes during the interview as needed. After the researcher conducted all the initial interviews and completed data transcription steps, the researcher contacted participants through email to share the interview transcription and address any remaining questions or clarifications the participants had as needed.

After completion of each round of interviews, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews into completed interview transcripts. The researcher then utilized the completed transcripts to complete the coding and theming process. The process of coding and theming allowed the researcher to determine trends and patterns among responses.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher processed each transcript and coded the responses. Coding is the act of reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments (Creswell, 2016). After coding each of the responses, the researcher began to develop themes based on the codes and the commonalities that appeared. Themes are “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2016, p. 186).

To address issues of reliability, the transcripts were reviewed independently by two second party researchers trained in qualitative research coding and theming practices. The process of having a second coder allowed for interrater reliability. Interrater reliability, or intercoder agreement, is the use of multiple coders to analyze the transcript
data, which provides stability of responses (Creswell, 2016). Interrater reliability requires agreement and consistency among raters and is the extent to which multiple raters judge responses in the same way (Vogt & Johnson, 2016).

The codes and themes were compared to find any commonalities and possible triangulation of data. Finally, the themes were then evaluated to determine if any recommendations or conclusions could be drawn on teachers’ attitudes and how these may impact discipline policies and responses to behavior. The researcher determined if any naturalistic generalizations could be made, which are generalizations that people can learn about the case for themselves or to apply to a population of cases (Creswell, 2016).

**Limitations**

This study only gained insight from teachers within one elementary school in a public district in the greater Seattle area. Teachers’ attitudes may highly differ in other districts locally or around the country. Generalizations cannot be drawn from this study, or to qualitative research in general; however, the study does provide insight that others can draw on. Another limitation is that this study required voluntary participation. As such, individuals that volunteered for an interview may have strong opinions regarding the topic and may not have provided a representative sample of teachers’ mindsets within this population.

**Summary**

The research method utilized in this study was a qualitative case study to examine the attitudes of elementary school teachers regarding student discipline and the use of restorative justice. After completing semi-structured interviews with participants, the researcher followed a process of coding and theming of transcripts to identify patterns,
commonalities, and ideas. Throughout the process, the researcher attended to issues of validity and reliability, including the use of two independent second party coders to address interrater reliability. The results of the study are addressed in Chapter Four.
Chapter Four

Results

This study examined the attitudes of elementary school teachers regarding student behavior, discipline, suspension, and the use of restorative justice. The study focused on the examination of information that an administrator may want to understand better when deciding to implement restorative justice practices. Each participant was interviewed once between the months of December 2017 and January 2018. All participants were teachers at the same public elementary school in the greater Seattle area. The participants ranged in their number of years of teaching experience, from first year teachers to teachers in their twentieth year of teaching. Six participants were female and one participant was male. The teachers taught grade levels from first grade to sixth grade. The researcher utilized the sampling strategy of maximum variation sampling, in which diverse individuals were selected based on identified criteria to include and describe multiple perspectives about the case (Creswell, 2016). The identified criteria were gender, age, grade level position, and years of teaching experience.

The participants’ responses described both their general attitudes regarding student behavior and response, as well as descriptions of their everyday practice. Their descriptions also provided insight into current disciplinary practices, and desired responses and plans for the future. Five main themes emerged from these interviews. These include a) behavior prevention, b) discipline attitudes, c) behavior response attitudes, d) leadership, and e) implementation needs. These themes are summarized in Table 1 below.
Table 1

*Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes with Representative Quotes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior Prevention</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>“Having a relationship with kids is the most important for sure.” (Laurie, ll. 350).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>“I think your role needs to be consistent and if you’re a teacher and I think it’s to set expectations.” (Laurie, ll. 60-61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Building</td>
<td>“Kids feel safe, want to take risks, want to support each other, and kind of are learning the lessons along the way about how to make good choices. That they are open to feedback, that they want to support each other.” (Cindy, ll. 40-43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Change</td>
<td>“Behavior slowly over time goes away, or at least decreases.” (Courtney, ll. 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Growth</td>
<td>“Want to give them the skills and tools that they need so that they can be successful human beings in school and in life.” (Leslie, ll. 490-491)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice</td>
<td>“It could be like...pretty profound or heavy or have like a lot more meaning.” (John, ll. 272)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior Response Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension Ineffective</td>
<td>“Either the kid’s suspended and is home for three days, which is probably a dream most kids, or they’re in the office, doing nothing that’s really going to change the behavior.” (Cindy, ll. 228-229)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses Inadequate</td>
<td>“It is kind of like a never-ending cycle of, yeah, this kid is losing a lot of recesses, but the behavior isn’t changing.” (Shelly, ll. 317-318).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function of Behavior</td>
<td>“Behavior is usually trying to solve something else.” (Danielle, ll. 371)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Support</td>
<td>“I feel like an administrator should get involved when it’s just really out of control and disrupting the learning of everyone else.” (Leslie, ll. 176-177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>“It does cause a rift between teachers and administration when administration is like doing something that they aren’t explaining to the teachers.” (Courtney, ll. 523-524)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>“Validate the teacher’s experience and the student’s experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Danielle, ll. 186)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementation Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>“A lot more background knowledge...but not just um read a book on it. Like, I need person to person like interaction on it...show me what it looks like.” (Shelly, ll. 401-402)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Plan</td>
<td>“Just using the words is not going to be helpful. You have to have...you have to do readings, have discussions, have buy in...and then come up with a good plan for setting this into place.” (Leslie, ll. 507-509)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-In</td>
<td>“I feel like there are people in the world that are just very old school, and don’t change. So um...help them see the benefits of it and why it would be important to try.” (Shelly, ll. 394-395)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behavior Prevention

All seven participants described behavior prevention as a key component of managing student behavior and provided specific strategies utilized in prevention. These specific strategies include relationships, expectations, and community building.

Relationships. Every participant described the importance of building and maintaining relationships with students as a key element of behavior prevention. Courtney described relationships with students as a sign of care, with students who feel cared for and feel their teacher thinks about them positively as more likely to comply and listen to their teacher’s directives. Laurie also commented that kids need to like who they are surrounded by to feel influenced, and stated that “having a relationship with kids is the most important for sure” (Laurie, ll. 350). Shelly described the need to build connections and relationships with kids, both in relation to school subjects, but also as individuals. She commented, “It’s isn’t like, oh, I’m your best friend kind of thing. But it’s like, I care about you, and I want you to be successful, so I am going to get to know
more about you, not just your school necessarily” (Shelly, ll. 124-136). Cindy also expressed her need for connecting with students on a more personal level, and how these personal connections and relationships positively impacted behavior within her classroom. She also explained that relationship building takes time and effort, often above and beyond a teacher’s typical commitment. Cindy described this relationship building as follows:

It’s probably getting to know the kids in a more meaningful way. And that takes a ton of time. So even though I was fun and happy and would go out to recess and play with the kids on the jungle gym, that’s not the same as having two kids in at lunch with you when they’re fighting with each other, or they’re being bullied, or their parents are going through a divorce or whatever. It’s a different level of um...of communication and understanding and it takes more time and it takes uh...a thoughtful ear. It just takes a lot more time and more thoughtful effort, which is absolutely worth it. (Cindy, ll. 150-159)

In describing important components of her classroom management philosophy, Leslie described the difference in a control and authoritarian approach, and one in which the teacher builds relationships and community with students. She also tied building relationships with students as a component of enjoying teaching and her job. Leslie commented, “You want to go, you want to enjoy teaching...have that relationship with the kids...that relationship that you...that you have with the kids is really important and will really set the tone for the rest of the year” (Leslie, ll. 480-487). John specified building relationships with students as a component of establishing trust between teacher and student. He recounted, “There has to be a level of trust in the classroom...especially, like,
from student to teacher, they have to be like...able to trust that you are going to like...be consistent” (John, ll. 155-158).

Most participants also described that building relationships with families of their students was another critical component in their everyday practice of behavior prevention. Cindy described the need for teachers to communicate and build relationships with parents as a form of behavior prevention. She explained her belief that many parents are not aware of the behaviors their child displays in the classroom, and that by providing more understanding of what occurs in the classroom, the parents could be more integral in supporting the needs of their child. She stated, “I think that if you really want to have success with a kid, there would have to be some really intentional link with the parent” (Cindy, ll. 588-589). Shelly reiterated the importance of a connection with families, both an academic and a personal connection. She called this connection critical, and described the building of a team between teacher and family in order to best support the child in the classroom. She stated, “Not just a connection academically...I’m talking like on a personal level, like, oh, how is your family doing? What do your kids like to do? What do you like to do?” (Shelly, ll. 462-465).

**Expectations.** Multiple participants commented on the need to set expectations, rules, and norms to prevent student misbehavior. In addition to setting these expectations, the participants described the need to explain the reasoning behind them, to enforce consistently, and to hold students accountable to them. John described posters for different areas of the classroom, such as the carpet, that detailed the expectations within that area, and how he reminds students of the expectations while in each of these areas. After describing the importance of teaching students the appropriate expectations
in each area, both in the classroom and the school, John commented, “And then like...knowing that the appropriate behaviors...the reason we want to see the appropriate behaviors is because like...they will...you know, they are expected to lead to more positive things” (John, ll. 83-85). Finally, John also described the need for school-wide expectations, and reviewing those with every class in the school.

Courtney expressed the need for consistency in holding students to the expectations, and stated, “Be really consistent with uh how you uh hold the kids accountable just so they know what the expectations are in the classroom and what is and is not ok” (Courtney, ll. 30-32). Laurie also commented on the need for consistency with expectations, as she said, “I think your role needs to be consistent and if you’re a teacher and I think it’s to set expectations” (Laurie, ll. 60-61). Similar to John, Laurie also commented on the need to explain the reasoning behind certain expectations to students. She explained, “They need to understand why what they are doing is acceptable or not...or why...you can’t just be like, well, you can’t scream because I said so. There has to be an explanation and a reason...a justifiable reason behind it” (Laurie, ll. 358-360).

Shelly also found it as the teacher’s role to set up expectations that prevent behaviors from happening in the classroom, and even commented that with strong expectations and a plan, “hopefully those behaviors will be very limited and the discipline will not need to happen” (Shelly, ll. 147-148). Finally, Leslie added that expectations should be written in collaboration with the students. She commented, “We spend a lot of time at the beginning of the year writing rules together, practicing them” (Leslie, ll. 13-14). She added that teachers should be warm demanders, in which they manage the expectations with an assertive stance in holding the students accountable. She explained, “So I
think...you can...be warm and collaborative and whatever...but, you also as a teacher need to assert yourself and say hey, we don’t mess around in here” (Leslie, ll. 230-232).

**Community building.** Another strategy for prevention of misbehavior that was described by many participants was the establishment of a community within their classroom. This was described by many as a key part in students collaborating with one another, and in understanding the impact of their behavior on their classmates and the community within their classroom. Shelly, Courtney, and John all described the role of the teacher in building the classroom community and maintaining the community throughout the school year. They also described the need for students working together and supporting one another. Courtney stated, “I think a teacher’s role is to create, uh, a positive community in the classroom and to maintain it” (Courtney, ll. 121). While she did not expand on the classroom community, she asserted that it is a primary role of the teacher in behavior management. John also commented on the teacher’s role in behavior by stating, “I think a lot of that is like the culture of the classroom and like the...expectations of having the way that your classroom works as a community known” (John, ll. 75-77). He also described a level of comfort and trust that students need to build with one another, in addition to their relationship with the teacher. He described, “You know you want the classroom to be a community where people can talk to each other and share things...and stuff like that. A place like, where people feel comfortable to be themselves” (John, ll. 160-162). Shelly described the importance of the community working as a team and supporting one another. She explained, “You need to all be able to work together without like bashing people, without like...like, oh I see that’s really
hard for you, can I help you?” (Shelly, ll. 495-498). Shelly emphasized the importance of everyone working together as a team for the group and all individuals to be successful.

Both Leslie and Cindy spent more time elaborating on the importance of the classroom community and the strategies they use to develop it. They both commented on the use of class meetings in building community within their classroom. Leslie described the daily occurrence of class meetings, and its use as a tool in teaching students the skills of habits of mind, emotional tools, and growth mindset. She described the feeling of her classroom community as, “We are in there together, we get our work done, we help each other out...it’s like, we are serious about what we do, but we also have fun, we play games” (Leslie, ll. 131-133). Leslie particularly focused on the role of the community in behavior prevention and management, as she related students’ understanding of their behavior and its impact in terms of the community, rather than the teacher or the guideline itself. She commented, “So I just feel like...building that community...when a student doesn’t follow a guideline, they almost feel like a sense of...guilt...that they’ve not done what they’re supposed to” (Leslie, ll. 48-50). Students build their reflection and understanding of behavior by understanding the impact on their classroom peers. In describing this, she stated, “Hey, we have a community here and if I don’t do this it’s going to affect, you know, everyone around me” (Leslie, ll. 63-64).

Cindy also described the importance of classroom community in her students’ behavior and overall learning experience. She commented that a classroom community is where “kids feel safe, want to take risks, want to support each other, and kind of are learning the lessons along the way about how to make good choices.” (Cindy, ll. 40-43). In recounting how she builds her classroom community, she explained that the main
component of building her classroom community is with class meetings, even though this practice is relatively new to her. She stated that this is the first year she has done class meetings with fidelity, and that in her classroom it is a formal, routine structure that her students can utilize to bring issues forth to the class. While a classroom culture has always been critical in her practice, Cindy described the added benefit of regular class meetings as follows:

As close as I am to my kids...I eat lunch with them, and they are always in my room at recesses and stuff...I hear things that I think, oh, did not see that coming. You know...uh...what makes a good friend? Or what motivates you to do your best in school? Or what was a time you dealt with grief? Or something. They share a lot of insightful things that really help me get to know the kids better. (Cindy, ll. 79-83).

**Discipline Attitudes**

All participants described similar attitudes and beliefs regarding student behavior and the purpose of discipline. These beliefs included the idea of behavior change for students, impacting students’ individual growth both in school and in the world, and a positive attitude toward the idea of restorative justice.

**Behavior change.** Each participant shared a belief that the purpose of discipline, or responding to student behavior needs, was to change student behavior in a more positive direction. They indicated a desire for the misbehavior to stop or at least to decrease. John commented that his response to behavior “is effective if the behavior stops” (John, ll. 37-38). He later added that his goal in managing student behavior and in discipline is to “change the behavior to the desired behavior” (John, ll. 67). Leslie also
commented that her response to behavior would be effective “if it changes behavior” (Leslie, ll. 324). Cindy too stated, “I think it’s effective because I think it changes the behavior” (Cindy, ll. 27).

Some participants acknowledged that changing behavior takes time and does not happen immediately. Shelly described a process of behavior change and explained that her role is to “get them on the right track to be successful” (Shelly, ll. 45-46). Both Laurie and Courtney alluded to the time interval of behavior change, and noted that some change should be considered progress. Laurie reflected that her response is effective if “like in a long term, I change their behavior for the better” (Laurie, ll. 50-51). Courtney viewed her response as effective if “behavior slowly over time goes away, or at least decreases” (Courtney, ll. 25). Each of the participants described success in teacher response to student misbehavior as change in the student’s behavior toward a more positive orientation. Teachers did not describe the enforcement of a consequence or punishment as a sign of effectiveness, but rather, if the students’ behavior changed.

**Individual growth.** In addition to behavior change, participants also described a desire to impact individual student growth and skills. Beyond minimizing or eliminating student misbehavior, the participants also spoke about helping students understand the impact of their behaviors on themselves and others, and educating students with skills that would enable them to be successful outside of the classroom or school walls. Danielle, Courtney, and Leslie all described their belief in the importance of students understanding their behavior and the impact of their behaviors, both on self and others around them. Danielle commented, “I would want the child to understand what they did wrong, and know what to do right the next time” (Danielle, ll. 91). She also stated that
one goal she would have in helping students understand their behavior is, “I guess to teach them that their behavior is not in a vacuum. Like, what you do does affect other people” (Danielle, ll. 153-154). Similarly, Courtney also commented that it is important to “help them understand like how their behavior affects other people and how it can affect them” (Courtney, ll. 103-104). Finally, Leslie also bridged between helping students understand the impact, especially in a future orientation. She explained that she wants students to “understand...why it may not be appropriate, and who it affects, and how this isn’t going to help them in their life...no, not in college, not in...their jobs, not in their personal relationship” (Leslie, ll. 150-152).

Other participants, like Leslie, also described the desire, and their belief in the teacher’s role, to help students in their individual growth beyond the classroom. They commented on the goal of molding and creating individuals that have the skills and are successful in the outside world. Courtney described this connection between school and their role in the greater world as follows:

I think a classroom is kind of like a microcosm of the world, so they have to learn to be successful in a classroom community because they are also going to have to learn to be successful in a work community, and a, on like a team, or in a home, or they are going to live in the world with like friends. I just feel like it helps them like learn the social skills that then they need to be successful humans and I think a lot of it starts in the classroom. (Courtney, ll. 112-116).

Leslie and Cindy also elaborated on their belief in educating the whole child in preparation for life outside of the school or classroom. Leslie stated that teachers “want to give them the skills and tools that they need so that they can be successful human
beings in school and in life” (Leslie, ll. 490-491). She also added that students we teach now need “to become productive, healthy citizens when they go out in the world” (Leslie, ll. 65-66). Similarly, Cindy also described effectiveness of responding to student behavior as “them being a successful student, and a successful member of our classroom, and a successful member of our society” (Cindy, ll. 92-93). She added, “I see it more now as helping form these like good little human beings that like know how to make good choices and that you have conversations with” (Cindy, ll. 121-122). The participants described an overall desire to help individual students grow in their interpersonal skills, with the ultimate goal of helping create not only productive and successful students, but also citizens and humans of the world.

**Restorative justice.** In discussing restorative justice, and other responses to student behavior, each participant expressed a positive attitude toward restorative justice ideas, and a willingness to learn more. While expressing a lack of knowledge around restorative justice, each participant still indicated an agreeable stance toward restorative justice, including the idea that restorative justice responses had the potential to be more meaningful and powerful than traditional responses to student behavior. The following are brief quotes from each participant regarding initial attitudes about restorative justice:

“I totally agree with it. I’m totally for it. Punishment, like I said...we’ll get complacent kids, but it’s not going to help them be better human beings. It’s not going to help them with their relationships.” (Leslie, ll. 417-419)

“I am completely open to it. I would just like to know more.” (Cindy, ll. 473)

“I think it could be very successful.” (Shelly, ll. 355)

“I feel like it’s something I would like to learn more about. I wish it was something we could try.” (Danielle, ll. 368)

“I think that it’s great.” (Laurie, ll. 238)
“It feels like that kind of process could be really, really powerful.” (Courtney, ll. 391)

“I think that it’s really intriguing to me, and I think that I would love to see it in action.” (Courtney, ll. 435)

“It could be like...pretty profound or heavy or have like a lot more meaning.” (John, ll. 272)

“It seems like it would be pretty powerful.” (John, ll. 274)

Overall, the participants each expressed an interest in restorative justice and commented that they were open to it or agreed with it based on their limited knowledge. The participants expressed a desire to know more, and later expressed additional information and supports they would need to implement it effectively; however, their attitudes toward it were positive and curious. Further description of their needs and implementation questions will be discussed in a later theme.

**Behavior Response Attitudes**

The teachers’ responses indicated three main sub-themes in their attitudes about responses to behavior within the school. First, each of the teachers described an overall belief that suspensions as they were currently used, both in-school and out-of-school suspensions, were ineffective at changing behavior, and they overall did not agree with them as a form of response to student misbehavior. The second sub-theme regarding behavior responses was the belief that the responses that were being utilized to respond to student behavior were inadequate. The teachers expressed many similar ideas about ideal responses to behavior, but indicated that the current practices to respond to behavior were not adequate and were not affecting behavior change. Finally, the teachers shared a similar attitude that it is important to understand and determine what the function of a
child’s behavior is. Many indicated a belief that student misbehavior was an indicator of deeper concerns, not that students were necessarily choosing to misbehave.

**Suspension ineffective.** Every teacher described a belief that suspensions were not effective in responding to student misbehavior or initiating behavior change. In addition, many teachers commented that suspensions were not only ineffective, but failed to meet the needs of students demonstrating the extreme misbehaviors in which they were being excluded from school for. For out-of-school suspensions, multiple participants stated that students who were sent home will not be doing anything productive while away from school. John described that the students who are suspended “might not have a lot of structure or security or consistency outside of school” (John, ll. 184-185). Danielle stated, “Many times they are at home and not getting anything school related” (Danielle, ll. 274), while Courtney commented, “They are just at home, doing nothing, or playing videogames” (Courtney, ll. 166-167). Shelly described her issue with both out-of-school and in-school suspension as follows:

I don’t think out of school suspension, oh just stay home...is beneficial to anyone. Um...a student is like, yeah, I get to stay home. The parent is like, crap, my kid’s home, what am I going to do with them? Do I need to take a day off work? And the teacher is like, oh are they just sitting and playing in the office or are they at home and no one is paying attention to them, and they’re just getting into more trouble. (Shelly, ll. 211-216)

While teachers described the ineffectiveness of out-of-school suspensions, the majority of their comments were on the topic of in-school suspension. They described not only it being ineffective at changing behavior, but also frustrating for teachers to see
kids, who had recently demonstrated a severe misbehavior, “just parked in the office” (Danielle, ll. 261). Courtney stated that she sees in-school suspension in her school as “kids sitting in the office all day doing nothing unsupervised” (Courtney, ll. 285-286). She added, “I’d hear teachers say, oh they are just in there like eating hot Cheetos...or they are just going down to have a snack and then coming back and then nothing happens” (Courtney, ll. 543-545). Leslie described, “I don’t feel like it should be babysitting, like they come to the office and they hang out and eat pretzels” (Leslie, ll. 185-186). Shelly made a similar comment that expressed her frustration with in-school suspensions and how they are currently practiced. She said, “I don’t agree with sitting in the office and playing all day as a discipline” (Shelly, ll. 208-209) and followed with the comment that “as a teacher, is the most frustrating thing to me, because it’s like, this kid just destroyed my entire room, with no...and now he gets to go play on the ipad” (Shelly, ll. 228-229). Similarly, Laurie also described it as “just a kid stuck in the office all day” (Laurie, ll. 118) and that the kids “are just like kinda sitting there, bored” (Laurie, ll. 119). Leslie also did not find in-school suspensions to be effective, especially given that students don’t complete the work they are missing while out of class. She described, “They’re just sitting and doing work in the office instead of in the classroom...I don’t really understand the purpose of that. Cause half the time, they aren’t doing the work and they’re goofing off...I don’t really think that’s useful” (Leslie, ll. 293-295).

Multiple participants also shared a belief that suspensions, both in and out-of-school suspensions, do little to change the behavior of students. Some of their comments are included below:

“It’s not necessarily going to help them” (Laurie, ll. 90).

“I don’t feel like that’s going to help” (Leslie, ll. 246).
“Either the kid’s suspended and is home for three days, which is probably a dream for most kids, or they’re in the office, doing nothing that’s really going to change the behavior” (Cindy, ll. 228-229).

“It definitely does not change his behavior long term” (Laurie, ll. 136).

Finally, some teachers described perhaps a somewhat conflicting belief in suspensions. While each of these teachers stated they do not believe suspensions to be effective at changing behavior, they also commented on specific student behaviors or actions as being “suspension worthy” (Danielle, ll. 255). Laurie commented, “There’s some behaviors that like do...that kinda do deserve a suspension” (Laurie, ll. 95-96).

Similarly, Danielle stated, “You know, those kind of big things are suspension...suspension worthy” (Danielle, ll. 255). Courtney also commented that “for safety reasons, suspension can be necessary sometimes” (Courtney, ll. 163). Finally, Shelly described, “I don’t feel like you should not suspend kids if it is an act that deserves it” (Shelly, ll. 290). While Leslie did not follow this same pattern of belief that some actions are suspension worthy, she did comment that the only positive of suspensions is that “it maybe just sends the message of wow, this is very serious” (Leslie, ll. 285-286).

**Responses inadequate.** In addition to a common belief that suspensions were ineffective at changing behavior, all participants also expressed a general belief and feeling that the current responses to misbehavior within their school were inadequate, both at meeting the needs of students and teachers. First, many teachers described a strong concern for safety within their classrooms and school. John commented that there are “definitely concerns around safety” (John, ll. 246) and that “some teachers have been physically attacked by students” (John, ll. 238). Courtney commented that students were “extremely violent or inappropriate toward adults and kids” (Courtney, ll. 179-180) and “intentionally hurting other students or adults” (Courtney, ll. 206) to the point that “no
one can learn and I can’t teach and it’s not stopping” (Courtney, ll. 40-41). Danielle also commented that “kids don’t feel safe and I can’t teach” (Danielle, ll. 47). Finally, Courtney commented that the extreme dangerous behaviors of students were “traumatizing to the other kids in the class” (Courtney, ll. 209). Cindy reported that students in the school “are going to school in trauma everyday” (Cindy, ll. 275-276).

While safety was a primary concern to many of the participants, all participants also described their belief that there were limited options within their school to deal with or respond to student misbehavior. While commenting that suspensions were not effective, the participants also described a concern that the district’s push to reduce or eliminate suspensions has caused their administrator to ignore certain behaviors. They described that reducing suspensions may be beneficial, but not without another plan or action instead. The teachers commented on this dynamic in the following statements:

“Kids are getting away with things that they should not...only because they’re trying to limit the number of suspensions. So, I don’t agree with that.” (Shelly, ll. 302-303).

“I like the idea of reducing suspensions, but not at the cost of like not...um...addressing behavior” (Laurie, ll. 148-149).

“There needs to be like a redirection of behavior, as opposed to just like, we’re just not going to suspend anyone. Like...um...an effort to like change behavior, as opposed to just changing the discipline around it” (Laurie, ll. 156-158).

“At a certain point, you need to do something about this” (Courtney, ll. 305-306).

“Principals took a hard line, and were like, ok, we are not going to suspend, we are not going to do this, and there was no data recorded” (Courtney, ll. 327-329).

“It’s not effective if it’s just like, oh, we’ve reduced suspensions just because we aren’t suspending kids anymore” (Leslie, ll. 304-305).

“They just wanna keep this number low” (Laurie, ll. 153).

The participants also commented that the district’s publicity around the reduction in suspensions may be misleading. Danielle commented, “People can be
creative...people can take numbers and pitch it however they want to” (Danielle, ll. 303-304), while Courtney stated, “Our behavior data from the past looks like nothing ever happens, which isn’t true” (Courtney, ll. 344-345). Leslie also described that “when you read the PR it’s like, oh, we’ve gone from this to this...” (Leslie, ll. 301), but that the reduction in suspensions does not necessarily indicate that it’s been effective because behavior has not changed.

While describing their displeasure with the perceived lack of response to behavior, teachers also commented that in the absence of suspension, there needs to be a set plan in place for how to respond to behavior. Many participants described a lack of plan within their school, and their general frustration with how behavior has been addressed. Laurie commented that the response to behavior is “not consistent for the kids is what I’ve seen” (Laurie, ll. 151), while Shelly commented, “It is kind of like a never ending cycle of, yeah, this kid is losing a lot of recesses, but the behavior isn’t changing” (Shelly, ll. 317-318). Courtney described a desire for a plan by saying, “We could reduce suspensions if we had an alternative, and like a good, structured way to set it up” (Courtney, ll. 283-284). Leslie said, “I feel like something needs to be done to help the child. The problem is, at schools, we just don’t have enough resources to deal with that, you know.” (Leslie, ll. 261-262). Cindy described the issue as follows:

I don’t think suspension is the answer, but you can’t just put a kid right back in the classroom without having some sort of a plan...a detailed, actionable, thoughtful plan. And I’ve seen that way too often...the kid had some calm down time, but then goes right back into the classroom and I don’t think that’s changed
a lot of their behavior or addressed the needs of the other kids in the classroom.

(Cindy, ll. 242-247)

Participants not only shared their attitudes regarding the inadequacy of current responses, but also shared their ideas on ideal responses to behavior and components that they believed should be included when responding to student behavior. Many participants shared that students should continue to engage in academic work or activities, even while out of the classroom due to a behavior that occurred within the classroom. Shelly commented that students should be “doing work that they are missing in class” (Shelly, ll. 235), while Courtney stated that students should be “reflecting and do some school work, um...if that could be facilitated, I think that is the ideal” (Courtney, ll. 169). In addition to school work, Courtney explained a desire for more resources, or staff members, to help students in a more comprehensive way. She commented:

A full-time adult that was there to support the students, not only in like doing some school work but also um like resolving problems or making amends in some way for their problems um or any problem that they caused. Um, I feel like it would involve like counseling, which having a really effective counselor would be a big bonus. (Courtney, ll. 194-198)

Danielle also commented on the need for another staff member to be involved. She said, “There has to be an actual space and a human that’s available. And specific plan and pieces on what you should actually do...like maybe a counseling piece, and maybe a homework piece” (Danielle, 262-264). Courtney and Danielle both commented on the need for an effective counselor to help in behavior response situations. Danielle also stated, “It would also be nice to have a counselor on site, all the time. An effective
counselor” (Danielle, ll. 516). Cindy also stated, “We need a counselor, we need a therapist, we need a psychologist” (Cindy, ll. 257-258). Each of these individuals and others called out a counselor, a therapist, and other trained individuals as a need in their school for behavior responses. With a trained professional, the teachers believed that specific skills could be taught with the students who are experiencing behavior issues. Some of their comments are included below:

“Work with them on problem solving skills and like regulating skills” (Laurie, ll. 504).

“Emotional support from a good therapist” (Danielle, ll. 387).

“A network or a group of people that are there to address the problem and you know...try and consider why...what’s going on, what happened, what are the repercussions, what will help them go down a different path?” (Cindy, ll. 376-378).

“Teach skills for deescalating or different ways you can respond when you are feeling a certain way” (Courtney, ll. 239-241).

“Get supported in their actions...supported in their behavior. To realize what they’re doing, and to talk about why it’s happening and what they can do to change it” (Danielle, 338-339).

In addition to their beliefs and attitudes on the need for trained support personnel to teach skills that may be lacking or to provide emotional and mental health support, the teachers also commented that students should work through a problem-solving process to understand the impact of their actions on others, and to make genuine amends to those who have been impacted. Danielle described that students should “understand what they did wrong, and know what to do right the next time, and if possible, make amends for it somehow” (Danielle, ll. 91-92). She described making amends as “something to acknowledge the fact that you made a mistake and try to help the person out who your behavior impacted” (Danielle, ll. 99-100). Similarly, Leslie commented that students should “understand...why it may not be appropriate, and who it affects, and how this isn’t
going to help them in their life” (Leslie, ll. 150-151). Laurie described how the amends process must occur in a genuine way and that conflict needs to “be resolved thoroughly, not just like forcing them to apologize to each other” (Laurie, ll. 578).

Finally, some participants also described a belief in engagement and involvement with students’ parents in the response to behavior. Shelly said, “Relationships with families...it is critical” (Shelly, ll. 319) and later added that in responding to behavior “the parents need to be involved as well” (Shelly, ll. 455). Cindy said that in her ideal response to behavior there would be an “open circle of communication that includes the student” (Cindy, ll. 381) and “a really intentional link with the parent” (Cindy, ll. 589).

**Function of behavior.** Many of the participants shared a belief that student misbehavior, especially the extreme behaviors, indicated a sign of a greater concern or issue. The participants explained a need to understand what the function of the behavior was, and why the student was displaying it. Many shared a common belief that students misbehaved for a reason, and that addressing the underlying issue would be a key to responding to the behavior. Shelly shared, “Usually the root of behavior isn’t because they just want to do it. There’s usually an underlying reason” (Shelly, ll. 59-60). Similarly, Danielle commented, “Behavior is usually trying to solve something else” (Danielle, ll. 371). They both mentioned the need to dig deeper into a child to understand the behavior. Shelly said, “There’s some deeper issues going on if that’s happening” (Shelly, ll. 224), while Danielle explained a need for “trying to dig deeper into this person and their behaviors” (Danielle, ll. 279-280). Courtney and Cindy also commented on the higher level of need these students have. Cindy described it as, “Wow. This is something big going on” (Cindy, ll. 257), while Courtney said, “There is more going on
with a kid usually that needs that higher level of support than we can provide” (Courtney, ll. 198-199).

Participants also commented on the impact of outside events on students’ behavior while at school. Shelly said, “Sometimes there is major things that happen at home that kinda give a little bit more validity to, oh, this is why they are acting out” (Shelly, ll. 108-109). John shared, “A lot of people that get suspended are kids...are people that need to be in school...and it’s not just a school thing that they are acting out against” (John, ll. 170-171). To solve this, Shelly and John explained a need for the student to feel cared for and wanted. John explained, “They just like want to see someone care about them...and so...they act out...in over the top ways that lead to that” (John, ll. 188-189), while Shelly commented that teachers need to “make them feel wanted cause something’s happening where they are not feeling wanted somewhere else” (Shelly, ll. 177-178).

The absence of comments about this is also an important result. None of the teachers commented on student misbehavior as a choice, or as a purposeful decision to not follow the school expectations.

**Leadership**

**Behavior support.** Most of the participants indicated a desire for administrators to provide support in behaviors of students once they reached a certain level. The participants indicated a belief that administrators should engage with a student and their behavior when they became very challenging. John commented that the administrator should help with “the more extreme behaviors and misbehaviors in class” (John, ll. 104-105), while Courtney commented that the administrator should step in when it is “beyond
what the teacher can do in that moment” (Courtney, ll. 123). Leslie also explained that
an administrator’s role in student behavior is to respond to the more extreme behaviors.
She stated, “I feel like an administrator should get involved when it’s just really out of
control and disrupting the learning of everyone else” (Leslie, ll. 176-177). Similarly,
Danielle and Shelly both commented that the administrator’s role in behavior should be
to remove a student from the classroom when their behavior is beyond what the
classroom teacher can handle in the moment. Shelly said the administrators “need to
either remove that child and figure it out, or work on a plan with a higher level” (Shelly,
ll. 141-142), and Danielle shared that the administrator should “separate the child who is
having destructive behavior from the rest of the kids” (Danielle, ll. 207).

In addition to responding in moments of challenging behavior and removing a
student, the teachers also explained a belief that the administrators should work with the
teachers as a team, and should act as a brainstorming partner to develop a behavior plan
or plan for support. John explained that he believes it would be helpful to have
“suggestions from the administrator on ways to like help the student in the classroom and
how to work with them” (John, ll. 115-116). Danielle also shared this belief as she spoke
about how an administrator should work to support a teacher. She stated that an
administrator should “be able to recognize what the students’ behavior is...maybe coming
up with alternatives to try and support them...but doing it in a way that supports the
teacher, not doing it at cross purposes with the teacher” (Danielle, ll. 163-165). Shelly
also spoke to the importance of working together as a team when she commented that
“working together will be a key ingredient for success” (Shelly, ll. 202). Cindy also
talked about the importance of an administrator building a plan with the teacher for the
student’s success in the classroom. She said an administrator should “like, not just like drop the ball, but like, come back with some sort of a suggested plan” (Cindy, ll. 209-210).

In working together as a team, the participants also explained that clear communication between the administrator and the teachers was important in responding to behavior. Danielle said that she would like the administrator to “let you know what they did with the child” (Danielle, ll. 199) after they have responded to a behavior. John also described a desire for “open communication from the administrator” (John, ll. 121-122), both in terms of communicating what responses were taken, but also in having a clear understanding of the plan for behaviors within the school. Laurie also touched on this piece of clarity in communication regarding the overall behavior plan for the school. She commented that she would like “more communication on what supports I am able to get for each kid” (Laurie, ll. 190). Laurie described a lack of clarity on what behavioral supports were available and how to access them. Her desire for clear communication from the administrator spoke to more systemic communication, in addition to communication about individual students.

Finally, the participants also spoke about a feeling of frustration and a belief that while they would like to be supported in these challenging behaviors by administration, they were not. Danielle shared that she had felt very little support from administration, and when she had tried to seek help in the past, it had made her situation worse. She shared, “I wasn’t really getting any support, it just made it harder” (Danielle, ll. 178). She later stated, “I feel like a lot of time teachers feel the behaviors don’t get supported...they just get minimized” (Danielle, ll. 191-192). Cindy also repeatedly
described the belief that behaviors were minimized and teachers were not receiving the support they needed from administration, especially for the most challenging behaviors. She described the burden this placed on teachers and the impact it had. Her comments are included below:

   I see that kind of thing pushed on a lot, where I can think of the teachers and many examples where it’s like, that was an enormous problem all year long and nothing ever really changed. It was all on the teacher’s shoulders. So, support and follow through. Actionable support. (Cindy, ll. 218-221).

What I don’t see teachers getting support with, which I think is the most overwhelmingly, burdensome, difficult, challenging, energy sucking thing, are those high needs kids. And, it’s always...well, that’s tabled for later. (Cindy, ll. 320-322).

   It just wears them down...it’s a big energy suck. And I see that...and I feel like I work with some of the best educators I could even imagine, devoted, hard-working, and thoughtful...and they’re completely exhausted...by what’s going on in their classrooms and the lack of support. (Cindy, ll. 609-611).

**Consistency.** Within supporting teachers with student behavior needs, the participants repeatedly commented on the need for consistency and follow-through from administration. Teachers reported feeling a lack of consistency, both in a general behavior response plan and in how behaviors were handled once they were responded to. Some participants also commented on a lack of consistency in how specific teachers or situations were treated. Laurie remarked that in her opinion the administrator was
“favoring certain teachers or favoring classrooms” (Laurie, ll. 429) and she believed that was detrimental to the success of changing misbehavior throughout the school. She explained that without consistency across the school, students will be unsure of the plan or the repercussions, as it was potentially different in various settings. She also added that she would like to see an improvement in the administrator’s “consistency on actually responding to calls or responding to issues...I think that’s really important. Um...but then also their consistency in what their response is, is really important” (Laurie, ll. 438-440).

Laurie described that sometimes behavior was responded to, but in other times the response was very different or did not occur at all. Courtney also described this lack of consistency, and how it had impacted the relationship between staff members and the administrator. She explained, “It does cause a rift between teachers and administration when administration is like doing something that they aren’t explaining to the teachers” (Courtney, ll. 523-524). Courtney believed that the administrators should be clear on their plan and response, and be consistent in this throughout the school.

Similar to consistency, participants also shared a belief that follow-through was highly needed from administration. Follow-through was commented on both in responding to challenging behavior and plans put into place, but also on initiatives and trainings for the school. Leslie commented that “there’s no real follow-up” (Leslie, ll. 384) for when behaviors occur. She also described a lack of follow-through when implementing new training or learning for teachers. Leslie commented that sometimes the material the administrator presented or provided was worthwhile, but “she needs to do a better job at following up” (Leslie, ll. 551). Cindy also commented on this pattern. She said, “I think the follow through kills us a lot of times” (Cindy, ll. 630) and explained that
while administrators may be well-intentioned or had good ideas, the lack of follow-through prevented anything successful from happening. Cindy also described her beliefs below:

Go to and say this is an issue, or a concern I am having, and not only do I need to talk about it, I need to problem solve, I need support, I need uh...I need follow through. I feel like that’s what’s been lacking from every administrator I’ve worked under...is the follow through. (Cindy, ll. 195-198)

**Trust.** In speaking about the administration and their role with student behavior and discipline, most of the participants commented on a desire for trust between the administrator and teachers. This trust was described as something that had been lacking, and that was frustrating for many teachers. Trust was described as belief in teachers when they were expressing a need, and validating their need or concern. Courtney described a desire that administrators “will trust my judgement that like I need them, it’s beyond what I can deal with in my classroom at that moment” (Courtney, ll. 89-90). Courtney elaborated that she had felt a lack of trust, and that her concerns or requests for help had been ignored or minimized. She added that this led to a pattern where “people wouldn’t call for help because they’d just get shut down” (Courtney, ll. 573). Danielle also shared in this feeling of doubt and mistrust between teachers and administration. She explained that administrators need to “validate the teacher’s experience and the student’s experience” (Danielle, ll. 186) in the moments of challenge, rather than brush it off or minimize it. Courtney also remarked that she thinks it would be important for administrators to “acknowledge that teachers do deal with a lot of the minor behaviors” (Courtney, ll. 355-356) and to step in and support when they ask for help. Courtney
alluded to teachers deserving credit and recognition for the level of support they provided to students, and a frustration that administrators had not recognized this.

Both Cindy and Shelly described their need for help from an administrator for severe challenges or behaviors, and their feelings of being disregarded. Cindy said that she would like to be able to go to an administrator to say “I need some support here to see me through this crisis, this difficult situation,” yet commented that she had “not had that” (Cindy, ll. 200-201). She explained, “I’ve never had great success in feeling completely backed by any administrator with any one behavior problem” (Cindy, ll. 183-184) and added, “I feel like it gets pushed...pushed off, pushed back” (Cindy, ll. 215-216). To Cindy, a veteran teacher, she commented that when she requested help from an administrator, it was at a point that she truly did not know how to handle a situation; yet, she felt as though her requests for help were not taken seriously. Shelly also reflected on the need for trust between teachers and administrators, and for a teacher’s request for help to be considered and responded to. She commented:

But really, just being supportive of teachers and believing...I think an important thing they can do is, unless they are in the classroom, take the teacher’s word for the behavior. No teacher is just making up a behavior to get a kid out of their classroom...I don’t think. That’s my personal thing. Like, if I go to an administrator, it means it’s a real problem and I need help. (Shelly, ll. 195-199)

**Implementation Needs**

The participants described a variety of different needs that would be required for restorative justice to be successfully implemented within their school. These needs included professional development, a clear plan, and the buy-in from all staff members.
Professional development. All participants explained a need for professional development for all staff members on restorative justice. The responses had many similarities, as most individuals commented on the need to read books or articles, watch videos, and attend training sessions. John commented that he would need “readings and stuff about it...videos...like ways to learn about it” (John, ll. 295) to learn more. Almost all participants commented that they have received a book about carrots and sticks, which had been given to them by the school principal as a book about restorative justice. However, they also all explained that almost no one had read from it, as there had been no expectation to and no follow-up. They each agreed that reading a book would be helpful in their training, but they would like it to be required for all staff members, rather than an optional read. Cindy commented, “Just giving someone a book doesn’t make anything happen” (Cindy, ll. 437), while Leslie explained, “We should be held accountable for reading it and then we should have discussions and then we should think about how are we going to make this happen at our school” (Leslie, ll. 448-449).

Participants shared a common idea of having training sessions on restorative justice as a whole staff. As part of this training, participants commented on their need to see restorative justice in action and what it looks like in a school setting. Shelly described that she needed “a lot more background knowledge...but not just um read a book on it. Like, I need person to person like interaction on it...show me what it looks like” (Shelly, ll. 401-402). She later added, “I need to see it in action to see what it looks like before I could really fully implement...” (Shelly, ll. 406). Cindy shared that it would be important to have “some sort of formal training...a professional person coming in” (Cindy, ll. 500-501). Courtney also commented that they would need “someone who is
really skilled to facilitate it” (Courtney, ll. 452). It was noted by several individuals that the training should be led by a professional individual, or someone with a strong background in restorative justice, rather than the school administration. In addition, Courtney, Leslie, and Cindy all commented on their belief in the lack of knowledge that the administrator had around restorative justice. Courtney reflected, “It maybe feels like our administrator doesn’t have a full understanding of it” (Courtney, ll. 499), while Leslie commented, “I don’t think she knows how to make it happen at the school” (Leslie, ll. 531-532). Cindy also described a belief that the administrator was less knowledgeable on the topic. She said, “The principal...that maybe...just doesn’t know the right thing to do or doesn’t have the...or utilize the resources available to them” (Cindy, ll. 254-255).

Some participants also described the need for the training to be ongoing, rather than a one-time or start-of-year session. Courtney said that staff members would need “training and modeling and practicing...for like a couple of years” (Courtney, ll. 589). Leslie also explained that training and practicing should be an ongoing cycle as she described the ideal learning and implementation structure. She commented that it was important to have “this whole cycle of learning, practice, come back, revise, discuss, revise, try again” (Leslie, ll. 460-461). In addition to the need for the training to be ongoing, participants also remarked on their desire for the training to be differentiated, or at least to provide examples and learning opportunities from the different grade levels or ages. John said that it would be helpful to “show that things look different at different ages...at different age groups” (John, ll. 362), and Laurie reflected that it would be helpful for her personally to see and know “where it has been used in the same grade level as I am in” (Laurie, ll. 370). John and Laurie, both first year teachers, described how in many
trainings they had a hard time applying it to their grade level, and believed they would need specific examples of restorative justice within their primary grades. Additionally, Danielle and Cindy, two veteran teachers, also described this same need. Danielle commented that she would need to know “how we expect it to be used...like in the various grade levels” (Danielle, ll. 458) and Cindy noted a need for an “understanding of restorative justice and how it’s implemented with different age groups and different noticeable behaviors” (Cindy, ll. 514-515).

**Clear plan.** Each of the participants spoke about their belief in the need for a very clear plan if the school was to move forward with restorative justice. Their comments included reflection that currently the school lacked a clear plan for behavior, and the need that many staff members had expressed for clarity around the plan and the systems in place. According to many participants, the first step in a clear plan was the need for a strong, unified definition of what restorative justice is, and how it is used within the school. Participants also expressed frustration that the term restorative justice had been used in the school by the administrators, but that staff had been confused by what was meant by it. Below are the comments of several participants regarding the need for a consistent definition and the frustration of the term being used without a clear understanding:

“Consistent definition of what restorative justice is” (Danielle, ll. 440).

“Right now, it’s just words that we use because we don’t actually have a definition” (Danielle, ll. 449-450).

“She never really defined it, so a lot of staff members felt frustrated” (Cindy, ll. 418).

“It’s a word that gets thrown around my building a lot, but I’ve never really learned a lot about it” (Laurie, ll. 223-224).
“I think the word restorative justice is thrown around. The word restorative practices is thrown around. They have us read these books. But then there’s no follow up” (Leslie, ll. 402-404).

“We don’t do this because it’s not restorative justice, but then there is no defined definition of what restorative justice was” (Courtney, ll. 425-426).

“It was just like, that’s not restorative justice. And everyone said, well, I guess we don’t know what restorative justice is” (Courtney, ll. 428-429).

Beyond the described need for a clear definition of restorative justice, the teachers also commented on the need for a system and structure in place school-wide. Danielle said the school would need “clear systems that everyone knows to access” (Danielle, ll. 478), while Cindy shared that “a plan needs to be in place to help everybody understand what it is, what it looks like, who the support is for it” (Cindy, ll. 569-570). Similarly, Shelly also commented “everyone needs to be aware of it and what it looks like and what the expectations are” (Shelly, ll. 413-414). Each of the participants commented on this need for a plan that everyone understands, and systems in place for people to access for help or support.

In addition to the building of structures and a system, participants commented on the need for a multi-year plan and focus. Courtney explained that in order for restorative justice to work or be effective, it would need to be a “full building focus for a couple of years” (Courtney, ll. 586). Leslie also shared the belief that the plan in place should go beyond one year when she reflected that the school would need “not just a year long, a several years long plan” (Leslie, ll. 451-452). Leslie continued in her explanation that a system has to be built and planned before implementation begins. Her comments are included below:

“it’s not just a matter of telling the PBIS team, ok, this is what we are doing. Or telling the leadership team. And no training.” (Leslie, ll. 519-520)
“just using the words is not going to be helpful. You have to have...you have to do readings, have discussions, have buy in...and then come up with a good plan for setting this into place” (Leslie, ll. 507-509)

Finally, as part of the built plan and system, participants also described their desire for ongoing evaluation of the plan and systems to ensure it is working and to adjust as needed. Shelly commented that the staff should be “seeing what’s working, what isn’t” (Shelly, ll. 418), while John shared that the plan should include “ongoing evaluation of it and seeing if things are working or not” (John, ll. 350-351). Cindy also shared a desire to assess how things are going and to check in with others on the plan and implementation. She shared the need for people to be “intentional and open...we need to meet consistently to talk about what this is” (Cindy, ll. 559-561). In addition to staff evaluation of the plan and implementation, Shelly also shared the need to have not only evaluation of the effectiveness, but also an assessment of both students and staff members’ attitudes about it. She described that she thinks it would be important to ask, “How do kids feel? I would say doing surveys. How are the kids attitudes toward it? How are the staff’s attitudes toward it?” (Shelly, ll. 446-447). Shelly viewed effectiveness here not only as a potential decrease in student misbehavior or alignment with the implementation plan, but also how individuals felt about it.

Buy-in. The final belief that participants shared would be important to implementation of restorative justice in their school was the buy-in and aligned belief systems of all staff members. Along with the complete buy-in from staff, participants also commented on consistency across the school building. Laurie and Shelly both explained their belief that restorative justice required a certain type of belief system or frame of mind, and that some individuals may not share the same frame of mind needed for successful implementation. Shelly stated the importance of all staff members “having
the knowledge of what it is and what it entails and the willingness to...implement...or to have that frame of mind” (Shelly, ll. 373-374). She explained her thoughts on frame of mind by saying that there are some individuals who may have a more authoritarian perspective on student behavior. These individuals would perhaps not buy into or believe in restorative justice, as they may hold on to their previous beliefs of strict consequences. She commented on this issue and how to help solve it in saying, “I feel like there are people in the world that are just very old school, and don’t change. So um...help them see the benefits of it and why it would be important to try” (Shelly, ll. 394-395).

Similarly, Laurie also described the “need for similar mindsets” (Laurie, ll. 248) among all staff members in order for implementation of restorative justice to be effective. She explained that her frame of mind around behavior seemed aligned with the philosophy of restorative justice, but that others may not share this attitude. She explained a contrary attitude or belief as follows:

Well, just kick them out. They shouldn’t be in your school. You shouldn’t let them be in your class. So that’s like a very polar opposite mindset...it’s like, well, they hit a kid, so they need to be kicked out of that school. That would be a mindset that I would definitely not identify with. (Laurie, ll. 281-284)

Others also described this need for alignment in belief systems and attitudes before implementation. Courtney commented that for implementation to be successful “you have to have like everyone on board” (Courtney, ll. 506). She said this alignment is so important in that if it does not exist, even the best plans are “not going to matter” (Courtney, ll. 504-505). Laurie shared that “open discussion is really needed” (Laurie, ll. 498-499) for the staff to come together and share their beliefs openly and work toward a
common belief system. Once a common, shared attitude exists, the participants reiterated the need for consistency across the school. Below are comments from multiple participants regarding their belief in the importance of consistency:

“Consistency...so the teachers feel supported and the kids are supported” (Danielle, ll. 481).

“Level of consistency with kids throughout the building” (Laurie, ll. 416).

“You have like all of the information at the start so you like know what it is and are in agreement of what it is” (John, ll. 298-300).

“Get everyone on the same page...we especially need classified staff and certificated staff to be on the same page” (Courtney, ll. 601-602).

“Everyone has an understanding and everyone knows what it is going forward” (Cindy, ll. 479).

John and Danielle also commented on their belief in the need to involve families as well. John shared that it would be important to “send articles to families” and to “reach out to families and do workshops or something” (John, ll. 282-283) to help them understand the shift in discipline practice and the philosophy behind restorative justice. Danielle summed up her view on the need for parent involvement as follows:

Ideally, I would love to see parent education as part of the process. I feel that parents can have...a tendency to want to see concrete punishment of a child who does something wrong to their child. I think having them understand the shift would be important to success. If they don’t believe in something...chances are good their child won’t believe in it either. (Danielle, ll. 522-525)

**Summary**

This study investigated seven participants’ attitudes regarding student behavior and discipline in an elementary school. Each participant was a teacher at the same public elementary school in the greater Seattle area. The participants’ descriptions and
explanations revealed five themes important to understanding student behavior and responses: a) behavior prevention, b) discipline attitudes, c) behavior response attitudes, d) leadership, and e) implementation needs.
Chapter Five
Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study investigated the attitudes of elementary school teachers regarding student behavior, discipline, suspension, and the implementation of restorative justice practices. The teachers interviewed in this study were public school teachers at the same K-6th grade elementary school in the greater Seattle area. The method of qualitative case study research was utilized for this study. Interviews occurred during the months of December 2017 and January 2018, and each interview lasted approximately sixty minutes. Six participants were female, and one participant was male. The ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 54 years of age, and their number of years of teaching experience ranged from one to twenty years of teaching experience.

This study aimed to address two research questions. The first question was to determine what themes existed within elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding student behavior and the use of exclusionary discipline to address student misbehavior. The second question was to determine what themes existed within elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding the use of restorative justice as an alternative to exclusionary discipline, and how might these themes provide insight for an administrator seeking to implement restorative justice practices within their school. Through analysis of the interview transcripts, five main themes emerged from these interviews that address both research questions. These include a) behavior prevention, b) discipline attitudes, c) behavior response attitudes, d) leadership, and e) implementation needs. Each of these
themes and their relation to the two research questions will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Each of the participants shared insight into their beliefs regarding prevention of student misbehavior, and shared similar thoughts on the most effective prevention strategies. Of these, teachers explained that the building of relationships with students was critical in managing student behavior. In their explanations, teachers commented that if a teacher does not build a relationship with a student, it is likely that the student will not care or feel inclined to behave, as they do not connect with the teacher. Similar to building relationships with individual students, participants also shared that building a classroom community and a culture of team work was important in how they viewed behavior prevention. Teachers described this process as important in building trust between teachers and students and among students themselves.

In another element of behavior prevention, the teachers also spoke about the need for clear expectations for students in terms of their behavior. The participants reiterated that students needed to know what was expected of them, and that it was the role of the teacher to make these expectations clear, and to consistently remind and enforce them. These two types of behavior prevention, building relationships and community, and providing and enforcing clear expectations, mirror the findings of Vaandering’s (2014) research on restorative justice and teachers’ pedagogies of discipline. Vaandering (2014) found that teachers tended to have a pedagogy of discipline that was either an engagement pedagogy or a control pedagogy. She found that teachers aligned with an engagement pedagogy “nurture relationship-based cultures” and those with a control pedagogy “reinforce punitive, managerial structures” (Vaandering, 2014, p. 71). Within
this study, teachers displayed attitudes that reflected elements of both the control pedagogy, with the reiteration of the need for strong expectations and enforcement of those expectations, as well as the engagement pedagogy, with the belief in building relationships and classroom community. However, in analyzing teachers’ responses, those with generally more years of teaching experience provided responses more in line with the engagement pedagogy, while teachers with less years of teaching experience were more aligned with a control pedagogy. The teachers with greater than ten years of teaching experience spent more time describing the importance not only of individual relationships with students, but in building a very strong classroom community and team. They placed emphasis on class meetings, reflections with the class as a whole, and relating behavior needs or challenges to the impact it had on the classroom culture. Teachers with less than ten years’ teaching experience shared responses that, while still commenting on the need for relationships, were more centered on expectations, controlling student behavior, and managing their response when rules were broken. In addition, the participants with more than ten years of teaching experience also commented that their approach to behavior and discipline has changed over their teaching career, and with more experience and perspective, they believe in the importance of relationships and community building even more.

In relating participants’ responses to Vaandering’s (2014) research, all participants shared some element of the engagement pedagogy of discipline, with a description of relationships and building trust with students. While the teachers with less teaching experience still commented on some control elements, they also paired their thoughts with a general dissatisfaction of results from these structures. They shared
anecdotal remarks that challenging students in which they had the most success were those in which they had built a relationship with. Participants’ foundational belief in relationships and engagement with students is an important element to consider when implementing restorative justice practices, and the participants in this study seemed to hold this viewpoint with varying degrees of strength.

The purpose of discipline and managing student behavior was ascertained from participants’ responses throughout the interviews. In describing their attitudes about the purpose of discipline and managing student behavior, all participants shared a common thread with the desire to change student behavior, and ultimately, ensure successful outcomes for students. When asked what the goal of student discipline was, all of the teachers described a need for modifying and changing undesirable or inappropriate behavior into something more productive and socially acceptable. Some teachers commented that discipline was important for eliminating disruptive activities or misbehaviors in order to ensure the best learning environment for all students. They described the need for students to display appropriate behavior so they could most effectively teach and all students could effectively learn. Their descriptions of discipline included a desire for students to modify their behavior to the classroom and school norms, and limited the role of discipline to success within the classroom and school in the academic setting.

Other participants extended this response and added that in addition to eliminating misbehavior and improving the learning environment, the purpose of discipline or responding to student behavior was to help mold young humans into successful citizens of the world. They viewed student discipline as a critical opportunity to teach students
the skills and behaviors they need to succeed in life. These teachers described a greater purpose in student discipline, and commented on the need to utilize discipline moments as opportunities for individual growth and learning, and their descriptions focused on the whole individual in multiple life settings, not just within the school setting. Teachers commented on the need for students to learn socially acceptable behaviors and skills in the present that would impact them in their future careers and relationships. Participants commented that the school setting was a microcosm of the world, and viewed their role in responding to student behavior as important in impacting the future trajectories of their students and the communities in which they live.

In addition to repeated comments about behavior change and the need to impact individual growth, the teachers also commented on restorative justice as a possible discipline response. Only one teacher described a solid understanding of restorative justice practices within a classroom or school and her confidence in it and knowledge of it. The other six participants all described some understanding of it, but also shared a desire to learn more about it and how it is implemented within a school setting. However, despite not feeling entirely knowledgeable about it, every participant commented positively about it, and shared an attitude that restorative justice practices would be beneficial for student success. Each participant shared that they believed it to be a positive and proactive idea for responding to behavior and for helping students grow and learn in a productive way. The teachers expressed curiosity, a desire to learn more, and a belief that restorative responses could be a powerful tool to impact student behavior and ultimately, the future success of all students.
While analyzing the comments and descriptions participants provided in their interviews provides important themes and commonalities, it is also informative to analyze what was not said in the interviews. None of the teachers commented about discipline in terms of punishment or reparations for inappropriate behavior. The teachers did not share a belief in the need for students to owe something or feel punished for misbehaving. Many even commented that traditional consequences, like owing a recess or losing a privilege, were not effective means to address misbehavior. The teachers shared a stance on wanting students to learn from the behaviors, and to understand the impact of their behaviors on themselves and their classroom community.

Each of the participants expressed a strong opinion and attitude that current responses to misbehavior were largely ineffective. When directly asked about their attitudes and beliefs about suspension as a form of student discipline, every participant shared a common belief that suspension was largely ineffective at changing behavior. In addition, some participants commented not only on its ineffectiveness, but also described it as having a negative impact on many students. Researchers have indicated that while traditional discipline and exclusionary practices are common practice, these practices not only do little to deter subsequent misbehavior, they also induce harmful risks on students who receive them (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory, Morrison, et al., 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016; Pane et al., 2014). The teachers in this study shared a belief aligned to this research, as they commented that students who are suspended often spend their time away from school engaged in unproductive, and even dangerous, activities. Many teachers described students spending their time during suspension at home playing videogames or getting into trouble in the community. They also shared that when
students return from a suspension, little has changed about their overall behavior. Finally, teachers also explained that when students are suspended, they are not engaged in any learning or academic activities. They shared a frustration that students are out of the classroom and miss critical learning when they are suspended. This is closely related to Mullet’s (2014) findings that when students are excluded from the classroom or school, they miss critical academic instruction, making it easy to fall behind and struggle with content.

Teachers also shared a general frustration with the structure of in-school suspensions within their school. In describing their thoughts around suspension, many participants commented that in-school suspension was also largely ineffective. They described the process as students being babysat by office staff, playing unsupervised, and learning little from the incident that resulted in the suspension in the first place. Teachers expressed frustration that students who had recently displayed violent or destructive behavior in their classroom were later observed playing in the office, with little discussion around how to change their behavior moving forward.

Participants were also asked to comment on their thoughts regarding their district’s push for eliminating or reducing suspensions. Every participant expressed a belief that reducing suspensions was a positive goal to work toward, and their belief that ultimately suspensions were not effective at changing behavior or helping students succeed. However, each participant also coupled this response with expressing a need for some type of response to misbehavior. The teachers explained that while they believed eliminating suspensions was positive, they felt that this push subsequently caused misbehavior to be unaddressed completely. Teachers expressed concern that behaviors
were not being addressed, and that this led to more severe behaviors and a high concern for safety in the classroom. Some participants even commented that while they did not agree with suspension and believed it to be ineffective, they thought it was the only option to ensure student and staff safety at times. They described a need for alternative responses to misbehavior that would address the behavior and allow students to learn and grow from the situation. They believed this to be lacking, and that reducing suspensions without an alternative in place was an issue that needed to be addressed. A few teachers also commented that the district was communicating a perception that the reduction in suspensions was effective, but personally believed that it would only be effective if behavior was changing. They commented that they do not believe this to be the case, and simply not suspending students does not lead to behavior change.

Beyond suspensions, the participants also commented on an overall dissatisfaction with current responses to behavior. Multiple teachers described escalated student behavior as a safety concern, and included descriptions of teachers and students being physically assaulted or attacked by students with behavior challenges. Many commented on violent behaviors exhibited by students, and the lack of a process or system to change or respond effectively to these behaviors. The teachers lamented that the cycle seems to continue, as students who are violent or misbehave continue to do so with little change. Part of their discussion also included a desire for more services and responses for students, and a belief that students who were of most concern needed additional help other than what was currently provided at the school. They expressed hope for counseling and mental health services, and felt that the extreme behaviors they experienced were due to the students needing more than what they as teachers or a school
could currently provide. Teachers also described a desire for a stronger system or process to respond to behavior, with a structure and plan in place to address the needs of students. The participants commented that from what they knew about restorative justice, it appeared as a possible alternative that could more adequately address the needs of students and guide them through a process of reflection, amends, and learning about their behavior and its impact, ultimately helping to shape behavior changes or modifications.

A component that was consistently brought up by each participant was the role of leadership and administration in behavior responses and student discipline. Participants shared similar beliefs about the role of administrators in student behavior and discipline; however, the two most veteran teachers differed slightly in their attitudes compared to the other teachers in the study. Most of the participants commented that they believed administrators should step in to support teachers and students when behavior was severe, and that administration should intervene at certain points. These teachers expressed their belief that teachers should manage student behavior and discipline within their classroom until it reached a certain point, and then the administrator should intervene. They each described this threshold as once a student became physically destructive and violent, either toward other students, the teacher, or property. The two most veteran teachers slightly differed in this belief, and described more ownership on the teacher for all behavior, even the more serious behavior described by other teachers. They also described greater personal responsibility for preventing misbehavior within their classroom, and explained a belief that it was the teacher’s responsibility to build the community and prevent misbehavior from occurring in the first place.
All of the participants expressed a general dissatisfaction with their current administrator in terms of response to student behavior and specific patterns that they perceived as frustrating from their leadership. Each participant described frustration regarding the perceived lack of consistency and follow-through from administration, and some commented on a belief that administration had shown favoritism to certain teachers in the school. They commented on a lack of trust between administrators and teachers, and the need for rebuilding of trust in order to work together for student success. Some described feeling a lack of support from administration and a perceived belief that even when they asked for help, it was not followed up on. Many participants also commented on their belief that the administrator was lacking skills and knowledge in the area of student behavior and discipline, and often did not fully understand practices that she commented on or desired staff to utilize. Every participant commented that the administrator had brought up the term restorative practice and had openly stated her belief in it and desire for the school to utilize it; however, each participant also commented that they did not believe the administrator had a full understanding of restorative practices and was likely inadequate in her delivery of information regarding it.

Reimer (2011) found that successful implementation of restorative practices requires strong administrative leadership. The current perception of teachers in this study does not align with a strong belief in their administrative leadership in this area, and would likely need to be addressed moving forward.

In regards to restorative justice, each of the participants described a positive attitude toward it, but also recounted different needs or requirements they believed would need to be in place in order for it to be successfully implemented. Bevington (2015)
found that successful implementation of restorative practices required congruent values, practices, and outcomes among individuals within the school community, and every participant in this study commented on the need for alignment across all staff members. They shared a belief that in order for restorative practices to be successfully implemented, every staff member needed to share not only a common belief in the practices, but also a consistent definition in restorative practices and their specific role in it. Reimer (2011) also concluded that a consistent definition was important for success. Participants in this study expressed current frustration over not having a clear definition or understanding of restorative practices, yet hearing the term being used by administration.

Another need that the participants described was for strong professional development and training, led by a professional in restorative practices. They described a desire for this training to be frontloaded, and ongoing through the first few years on implementation. Part of this training included descriptions about training a core group of teachers or staff members throughout the school that could also serve as leaders in restorative practices throughout the building. Some participants also commented on the need for the training and practice to be differentiated based on grade and age levels. Bevington’s (2015) findings included similar needs, as staff indicated that implementation is most effective if there is a core of highly skilled staff, a shared bank of resources and ideas for staff to draw upon, and professional development focused on emotional intelligence. The participants in this study also described a need for a clear plan of implementation to be in place before the school officially adopts restorative practices within their building. They reported the importance of a plan, including a
multi-year plan, that detailed the processes, systems, and steps the school would utilize. The teachers believed this to be of critical importance for every staff member to be informed and implementing the same practices throughout the school. Reimer’s (2011) study shared this finding, as teachers reported a need for a strong system with structures and training in place for staff members.

Finally, teachers in the study also reported the need for buy-in across all staff members, and also in the parent and family community. Many participants commented that implementing restorative practices would require a shift in attitudes and practice for some staff members, and stated their belief in the importance of all staff members, both certificated and classified, to be in agreement on not only the procedures, but also the philosophy behind restorative practices. Participants described the need for buy-in from staff members, and the requirement for open conversations with those who may not be in alignment with the values of restorative justice. Vaandering (2014) suggested that implementation should include a critical reflection on core values of staff members and how they align with the principles and values of restorative practices, which is similar to the comments made by some participants in this study.

Limitations

This study only gained insight from teachers within one elementary school in a public district in the greater Seattle area. Teachers’ attitudes may highly differ in other districts locally or around the country. Generalizations cannot be drawn from this study; however, the study does provide insight that others can draw on. This study included six female participants and one male participant and as such it is difficult to make any conclusions about the attitudes of male teachers with only one representative.
Additionally, all of the participants in this study were white. Further research in this area should aim to include more male and minority participants to seek an understanding of their perspectives on the issue.

Another limitation is that this study required voluntary participation. As such, individuals that volunteered for an interview may have strong opinions regarding the topic and may not have provided a representative sample of teachers’ attitudes within this population. As a case study, seven participants meet the minimum criteria for sample size (Creswell, 2016).

**Implications for Practice**

The participants in this study were all public school teachers from one K-6th grade elementary school in the greater Seattle area. This study aimed to describe the attitudes of teachers regarding student behavior, discipline, suspensions, and the implementation of restorative justice. Five themes were identified including a) behavior prevention, b) discipline attitudes, c) behavior response attitudes, d) leadership, and e) implementation needs. Implications of these findings are included below. These implications may apply to elementary through high school institutions, both in the public and private sector, who are aiming to implement restorative practices within their school.

The first implication of this study is that adopting or implementing restorative justice practices within a school building is a process that takes time and forethought. The decision to implement restorative practices cannot be decided on a whim, or without any input from the school staff or greater community. Research in restorative justice implementation also indicates this as a strong need. Vaandering (2014) found that the implementation of restorative practices must address the structural, personal, and
professional influences and beliefs of educators, while Bevington (2015) indicated an importance in having congruent values, practices, and outcomes among individuals within the school community. Participants in this study commented that they had heard the term restorative justice “thrown around” in their school, and had been frustrated by this because it had never come from a whole group discussion around discipline or plans moving forward. An administrator seeking to implement restorative justice should first consult the school staff, both to understand their beliefs and opinions, but also to be transparent in the goals for the school and the decisions to be made moving forward.

One finding from the study is that all participants commented in support of the ideas of restorative justice and were curious to learn more and implement it within their school; however, their hesitation came from a feeling of unknown and confusion in current discipline procedures within the school. An implication from this finding for administrators is that it is critical to have a strong plan in place for implementing restorative practices. This plan should be a multi-year plan, and detail what components the school will adopt each year, specific roles of every staff member, and training to support implementation. It is important to have clarity regarding the plan, how teachers can learn more and access support, and the direction in which the school is moving toward. This plan should also consist of a pre-plan, with set objectives and training in place prior to whole-school implementation. Along with this plan, a specific training model and plan should also be in place. This would include frontload training and background knowledge for all staff members, as well as an ongoing training plan that is consistent throughout the first few years of implementation. This implication is similar to the findings of previous restorative justice implementation research. Reimer (2011)
indicated that one component of successful implementation was the need for strong training for teachers to increase their confidence in using restorative practices. Additionally, implementation for restorative practices requires a strong system with structures and training in place for staff members (Reimer, 2011).

Another implication for administrators seeking to implement restorative practices is to build a team within their school of highly trained and confident staff members who can serve as a guide and resource to other staff members. The findings from previous research also indicated that implementation is most effective if there is a core of highly skilled staff, a shared bank of resources and ideas for staff to draw upon, and professional development focused on emotional intelligence (Bevington, 2015). The teachers in this study commented on the need to first have professional trainers teach the staff, but also to have a team of staff members within the school who had more knowledge and training to help others. This team would be responsible for monitoring implementation according to the plan, and assisting others in need of support.

A final implication for administrators based on the findings of this study is the importance of trust, relationships, and transparency between administrators and staff members, especially in terms of student behavior and discipline. While teachers commented on their desire to learn more about restorative justice, they continually described a lack of trust between teachers and administration. They did not feel connected to the administration and even commented on a lack of trust based on continual lack of follow-through from their perception. Teachers described not knowing the policies and procedures around student discipline in their school and a need for stronger transparency and clarity across the school. Restorative justice has a foundation
of relationship, among and between students, staff members, and families, and it is vital for a school to have strong, trusting relationships among its members in order for restorative justice implementation to be effective. Vaandering (2014) suggested that implementation should include a critical reflection on core values of staff members and how they align with the principles and values of restorative practices. This reflection on core values may also address the feelings of relationship and trust within school staff communities.

**Areas for Further Research**

This study investigated the attitudes of elementary school teachers within one public K-6th grade school regarding student behavior, discipline, suspension, and the implementation of restorative justice. This school was chosen due to staff members having some introductory knowledge around restorative practices, but who have not yet as a school adopted restorative justice as part of their discipline policy or procedure. The findings of this study may help administrators seeking to understand possible perspectives and attitudes of teachers before they begin their own implementation process within their school. Given that this was a qualitative study and not generalizable to other settings or populations, the first area of further research would be to conduct similar studies in other school settings, both public and private. In addition, further research could also include a similar study at different levels of schooling, including middle and high schools.

While understanding teachers’ attitudes regarding discipline and restorative justice is important, as they are often the initial line of contact with students in schools, additional research is also needed to understand the attitudes of classified staff members.
within schools. Classified staff members include supervisory staff, teacher assistants, custodial staff, office staff, kitchen staff, and other employees within the school building. These individuals often have contact with students in more unstructured areas throughout the school, such as recess or lunch time, and would also play a primary role in behavior management and response. Further research could aim to better understand their attitudes and beliefs around student discipline and the implementation of restorative justice, as implementation within a school building would also require their support and follow-through.

Another area of research to consider is the investigation of the attitudes and beliefs of parents and guardians of students in the school. The implementation of restorative practices within a school would require the involvement of parents in the process of reconciliation and conferencing. While restorative justice practices are a shift from traditional discipline policies for staff members within schools, it is also a shift for many parents who experienced traditional discipline policies as students themselves while in school. Parents involved in student discipline often either have a student that has done harm to another student or staff member, or who has been the receiver of harm from another student. They may feel strong emotions after a discipline event has occurred, and may come to a situation with specific opinions and attitudes about how it should be addressed. As a school plans to involve parents in restorative practices, it would be highly important to understand the beliefs and attitudes the parent population holds, and how to address these opinions during implementation.

A final area of further research to consider is the role of mental health services within restorative justice practices and behavior responses in schools. Many of the
teachers in this study commented on the need for counseling and mental health services or partnerships with their students, and spoke about the high needs many of their students have. Restorative justice practices alone may not address this need, and it would be important for further research to investigate how to incorporate mental health services into restorative practices and school responses to behavior.

**Conclusion**

In this study, I investigated the attitudes and beliefs of seven public elementary school teachers regarding student behavior, discipline, suspensions, and the implementation of restorative justice. Their accounts represent the experiences and attitudes of teachers from the same public K-6th elementary school in the greater Seattle area. The interviews provide insight into teachers’ potential attitudes around student discipline, which may be useful for administrators seeking to implement restorative practices within their school.

The participants shared their attitudes and beliefs regarding student behavior and discipline through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Five themes emerged from these interviews including a) behavior prevention, b) discipline attitudes, c) behavior response attitudes, d) leadership, and e) implementation needs. Each of these themes provide insight to administrators on ideas to consider when implementing restorative practices. These themes are very similar to findings from other qualitative studies regarding restorative practice implementation in other schools. The primary difference in these results is that these attitudes and beliefs represent teachers prior to implementation, whereas findings from other studies represent attitudes and beliefs either during or after implementation. These results are significant as they portray a need for administrators to
consider multiple factors, opinions, and beliefs of staff members before deciding and moving forward with restorative justice implementation.

The results of this study indicate that these participants are willing and open to restorative justice practices, and have similar beliefs and attitudes regarding student behavior and discipline that complement the underlying philosophy of restorative justice. However, the findings also revealed multiple needs of the teachers and staff members within this school if they were to move forward with adopting or implementing restorative practices. Participants shared a strong desire for more knowledge, understanding, and training around restorative practices. They described a need for clarity and a strong plan, procedure, and process in place regarding student behavior and response. Finally, they also shared a need for transparency, trust, and the building of relationships between teachers and administrators within their school. These results may provide insight into teachers’ potential attitudes and beliefs regarding student behavior and discipline, and shed light on the need for administrators to gain a full understanding of the perspectives of their teachers before implementing a new practice within their school.
References


Lindsay, C. A. & Hart, C. M. (2017). Teacher race and school discipline: Are students suspended less often when they have a teacher of the same race? *Education Next, Winter, 72-78.*


Appendix A

Email Invitation to Participants and Informed Consent

Greetings (Name),

I would like to request your help in completing a research project about the attitudes and views of elementary school teachers regarding student discipline. Through this research, I am seeking to better understand teachers’ attitudes and how understanding teachers’ current attitudes impact the effectiveness of school discipline policies and responses to student behavior. You are in a unique position to share your views and insights; therefore, I am requesting you to participate in the following way:

Participate in one, one-on-one interview. The interview will be no more than one and a half to two hours. We can arrange the interview at a time and location convenient to you between now and January 30, 2018.

I have attached the informed consent for you to review as well. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. All information will be kept confidential.

Please email me back to let me know your willingness to participate.

Thank you,

Kaitlyn Spore
Title of the Study: Case Study Analysis of Elementary Teachers’ Attitudes Regarding Student Discipline and the Implementation of Restorative Justice

Principal Investigator: Kaitlyn Spore, Student, sporek1@spu.edu, (949)330-9802
Co-Investigator: Dr. Cher Edwards, edwards@spu.edu, (206)261-2286

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH
The purpose of the research is to explore and describe the attitudes of elementary school teachers in regards to student behavior, exclusionary discipline, and restorative justice. The researcher aims to determine if certain themes emerge that would aid an administrator as restorative responses are implemented in their school building. This study will provide insight on teachers’ attitudes and how understanding teachers’ current mindsets impacts the effectiveness of school discipline policies and responses to student behavior. You have been invited to participate because you are an elementary school teacher that teaches at a school with some beginning exposure to Restorative Justice practices.

This study will include males and females between the ages of 21 and 60.

The research will take place at Seattle Pacific University, 3307 3rd Ave West, Seattle WA and at Southern Heights Elementary, 11249 14th Ave S, Seattle, WA.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?
If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to participate in one, one-on-one interviews. The interview will be no more than one and a half to two hours. We can arrange the interview at a time and a location convenient to you between now and January 30, 2018. These interviews will be audio-recorded. You may withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, you will be invited to offer feedback on initial written transcriptions for accuracy should you choose.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?
There are no know major risks to your participation in this research study.

Seattle Pacific University and associated researchers do not offer to reimburse participants for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, please notify the investigator in charge, (Kaitlyn Spore, 949-330-9802).

Participant’s Initials________
Page 1 of ____
ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We do not anticipate direct benefits; however, your participation will contribute to understanding elementary school discipline practices and the views teachers may hold on these practices, and you may derive satisfaction from your contribution.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

The results of this study will be written and presented in the Principal Investigator’s dissertation. While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used nor will you be identified in any way. The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. Your de-identified data may be used in future research, presentations or for teaching purposes by the Principal Investigator listed above.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator, (Kaitlyn Spore, 949-330-9802).

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you should contact the Seattle Pacific University Institutional Review Board Chair at 206.281.2201 or IRB@spu.edu.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you begin participation and change your mind you may end your participation at any time without penalty. You may elect not to answer specific questions in the interview.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Participant’s Name (please print):____________________________

Participant’s Signature:_________________________ Date:____________

PI’s Name (please print): Kaitlyn Spore
PI's Signature:____________________________________
Date:________________

Copies to: Participant Principal Investigator
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. When a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? Do you think your response is effective? How do you know?

2. What do you believe is the purpose of disciplining a student?

3. What do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline? What do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?

4. What are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student discipline? Why or why not?

5. What are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think efforts at reducing suspensions within this district or school have been effective?

6. Tell me what you know about restorative justice.

7. What are your thoughts and/or feelings about restorative justice?

8. If you were to try restorative justice, in your classroom or in your school, what support would you need?

9. What do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, for restorative justice responses to be effective?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs, thoughts, or opinions regarding student behavior, discipline, suspensions, or restorative justice that you would like to share or you think would be helpful to this study?
Appendix C

Interview Transcripts

Teacher 1 [Pseudo name Courtney]; Female; 32 years; 7 years’ experience
12/18/17; 11:15am; Interviewed by Kaitlyn Spore
Currently teaching 3rd grade

KS: Ok, to start, can you state your name and acknowledge that you are being recorded.

I: My name is [Courtney] and I acknowledge that I am being recorded.

So, the first question is, when a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? Do you think your response is effective, and how do you know? And I might also ask you how has how your response changed over the course of your teaching career, if it has at all.

Yeah, um, I would say it really depends on... partly the student, and partly the behavior. For minor things that, like the way I would respond to any kid do any little thing is usually just verbal to start or I mean if I can get them to understand with like a hand gesture of some kind or like a face... [giggles]...proximity, that’s also fine. But usually I say um, just a quick verbal reminder...uh...I also use some positive um reinforcement type things, so I feel like I also try and reward kids that are doing the right thing...um...before having to like discipline a kid who’s not...uhh...a lot of times for either like repeated um misbehaviors um I will find time to like have a conversation with a kid outside of class um...I try to keep it to more like natural consequences um...so like I don’t want them to just like miss recess all the time, so a lot of times those conversations happen like during lunch so I will have them sit with me in the office and like have lunch with them and like talk through um what’s going on and like choices that they made and how it affects other kids. Um...sometimes it will involve parent communication uh especially if it’s like a repeated problem...um...I feel like I am kinda blanking here but...I also um... if I need to I will call for support in the office...um...usually pretty severe, really disruptive behaviors, otherwise I’ll deal with it in the classroom. Um...either talking to the kid, moving the kid, having the kid take a break...I’ve used buddy classes before, stuff like that. Um, and, I feel like it’s effective if behavior slowly over time goes away, or at least decreases. Um...I don’t always think it’s effective what I do because it doesn’t always go away... [chuckles]...I think another important part of dealing with behavior is relationships because if kids don’t care about you or what you think of them or what is going on in your classroom, they are much less likely to want to listen to you or want to change behavior because of what you say, so, I feel like it is most important to like really build that up in the beginning of the year and be really consistent uh with how you um hold the kids accountable just so they know what the expectations are in the classroom and what is and is not ok.
Mmhmm. What would you describe is like, you said, the behavior gets to a certain point or a
certain level of disruption that you would call for help... how would you describe those
behaviors?

Um...I would usually call for support if there was something unsafe going on, like a kid is either
um trying to hurt another kid, hurting me, uh destroying things in the classroom, uh yelling cuss
words that are like making it so...basically so if it’s that no one can learn and I can’t teach and
like it’s not stopping then I would call for support cause it’s not fair to the rest of the
kids...because everyone is focused on this one behavior and no one can do anything else until
there’s a break from it. Uh, I will sometimes send a kid to the office for like a break or a cool
down, but that doesn’t necessarily, it’s different than calling for like someone to come and like
remove a child. Um...I had a student this year and that needed very frequent um assistance from
the office, but since that student has been put into a different placement, I haven’t since they’ve
left needed that support at all...so...it’s very dependent on the kids in the class.

When you call for support, what do you hope to have happen?

I really hope that um the student can be given time with another adult, either if it’s in the
classroom that’s fine, but in my experience, they need a different setting to reset. Um... I hope
that that student can get time with an adult to kind of like deescalate and get their brain in a place
where they can come back and join class.

What does that coming back in and joining class look like?

I mean ideally it means that they’re able to sit and learn, like they are able to do work and learn
as if that episode had not happened...[chuckles]

But that re-entry piece, what does that look like, when an adult, let’s say in your perfect world,
an adult comes, removes the student, the student deescalates, resets, and is now ready to go back
to class. What does that like look like? Like, your classroom door opens, and what would
happen?

Um, ideally they would come in and either be able to look around and see, oh, we are doing this,
I know where I should be. Or come up to me and ask for help in getting back into what we are
doing. Like if we are in math, they can either come to wherever I’m sitting and helping and just
sit and do the work with me and the other kids, or if we are still in a lesson, that they can come
back in and join the lesson. If people are working independently, then they can just head to their
seat and start with direction from me start, just get back into work.

Ok, so kinda just on their own, come back in, and kind of reintegrate back into the room?

Ideally, yeah... [chuckles]
Ok. Um, has your response to student behavior changed over the course of your teaching career?

Yes, I would say um... gosh, that’s a good question. Um, I think it’s changed a lot um... my first couple years of teaching I was not in a place where I had any like extreme behaviors, and so the behaviors I feel like I struggled with my first year teaching would be like non-issues now. Um, so, I am just trying to think, I feel like I, I have gotten a lot better at like my own like management of um, I guess emotions, like I feel like I can stay much calmer and I used to, I used to get more escalated by kids than I do now. Like, I’m able to stay calmer because I’ve realized that like really helps the kids to also stay calmer and uh, that’s a big difference I would say, that I wasn’t like that necessarily my first couple years of teaching. Um, I’ve also had [clears throat] really inconsistent um levels of support from like administration so I feel like right now I am in a place where I know I can call for support and they will trust my judgement that like I need them, it’s beyond what I can deal with in class at that moment and I will get support for that student and get them back into class...um...in the past I’ve had other times where I’ve felt unable to call for help, so like, you just kinda, think, I think you just let more happen in class, just, things happen that you don’t want happening but you don’t know what to do about it. I feel like now, I understand when I can call and get support from another adult in the building, um, I understand more like options, like, oh, I can send this kid with another teacher to have like a buddy class, or I can um, I don’t know, I just feel like I didn’t always know what to do, so a lot of behaviors just went on when they shouldn’t, when now they wouldn’t, because I didn’t know how to respond.

Ok. Um, what do you believe is the purpose of disciplining a student, and just, how would you define discipline?

Um, I think that um the point of discipline is to help kids kind of like slowly understand like what their behavior maybe should look like, and help them understand like, how their behavior affects other people and how it can affect them. Um...so, I think the purpose of it is to kind of like, mean, I guess to create a consistency, so like you know um, how the expectations are. Discipline helps to show them when they are not meeting those expectations or when they are not following like the norm of the classroom. And, um, help them to correct it.

Ok. Um, why do you think it’s important for them to correct their behavior or have self-awareness, is kind of what it sounded like you were talking about a bit?

I mean, I think a classroom is kind of like a microcosm of the world, so they have to learn to be successful in a classroom community because they are also going to have to learn to be successful in a work community and a, on like a team, or in a home, or they are going to live in the world with like friends. I just feel like it helps them like learn the social skills that then they need to be successful humans [small chuckle] and I think a lot of it starts in the classroom.

Um, what do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline? And what do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?
I think a teacher’s role is to create uh, a positive community in the classroom and to maintain it. Um, I think to help students like function in the classroom and learn, and the administrator comes in when there’s something happening that is beyond what the teacher can do at that moment. Um, so the goal of being in the classroom is learning, and so if there’s something going on that, at that time, that like you can’t problem solve it and the kid can’t move forward until it’s...um, like if the goal is learning, and a student has something going on that is causing them to not being able to learn and causing others to also not be able to learn, I feel like the administrator’s job is to help support in either, um, deescalating them, or helping them problem solve, kind of like for the sake of the rest of the class I guess. Cause, if I could just stop and like problem solve and help them deescalate in the moment, that’d be great, but then you are ignoring all the other kids. Like, I wish I had more time for that, um, and I feel like that’s where it can be helpful to have administrators at least have something, or a way, or a place that kids can deescalate and get ready to join the class again. If that makes sense.

Mmmhmm. Ok, um, tell me a little bit more about like, communication between administrator and teacher in those moments where you need an administrator’s help. Like, how do you communicate between the two people and then how do you communicate once like the incident has been responded to?

Um, in the moment, I usually will either call the main office, and they will communicate it to someone who’s available, usually our, essentially our assistant principal, our EA. Um, or I will text her directly and ask...especially if it’s like not immediate. Like, would you have time to problem solve with some kids during recess? Or would you have time to address this later in the day? And she will usually text me back with like, yeah, I can do it at this time. But if it’s immediate, I usually will call the office for the support of whoever is available. And then I, then we just make sure that we talk in person afterwards. Um, for one student we had like a google spreadsheet, that we would, when there was an incident, we would each type in our part, so like, I put in what happened before hand and what the antecedent was, and then whoever supported would then put in like what happened next and the response and the amount of time it took. And um, we did that for only one kid in my experience. But um, usually it is just like conversations afterwards and follow up like, are there consequences that like are still like, are they going to miss a recess with you? Did you contact parents? Would you like me to contact parents? That kind of stuff. It’s usually in person, like after school or during recess or during planning or whatever.

Ok. What are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student discipline? Why or why not?

Um, I feel that um, suspensions, um, are sometimes necessary, but usually, I would prefer that things are dealt with in in-school suspension...um... just because if the kid is having trouble in school, I don’t always see that they have the same like the same level of support at home as they do at school. And so I feel like if they are just out of school for like a day or two, um... I think
for safety reasons, they can be necessary sometimes, but I feel like if they are just out of school, they don’t always come back knowing like, oh, I was suspended exactly for this reason, I’ve spent time at home really thinking it through, and like figuring out how to change my behaviors. Um, I don’t think that work always happens, I think sometimes they are like just at home, doing nothing, or playing videogames, or whatever they’re doing at home. And so, I feel like if there is a way for them to have an in-school suspension, where they could have time to do more like reflecting and do some school work, um, if that could be facilitated, I think that that is the ideal. Um, but I mean, I guess if there’s a, I don’t know, I mean if you had it set up well in your school, I don’t know that out of school suspensions would be necessary at all...um...if they are in a safe place for the student to be, with adult supervision, um, that would be better than um an out of school suspension, kind of anytime.

You said, out of school suspensions are sometimes necessary. Describe those, when would those be? Like, when do you think that would be necessary?

Um, I feel like, um, I’m trying to think. Well, I guess, when I think about those kids that I’ve had in my class that have been suspended, it’s because they’ve been like extremely um violent or inappropriate towards adults and kids in the school and I guess it has almost been like a reset for them. Um, if they had an in-school suspension place that would work, I think that would be fine. But I think um what ends up happening in a school like ours is that it just like drains all the time of everyone in the office for whoever’s in school suspension. They are just sitting there in the office just like draining the attention of like all the adults and this year at least when one kid got suspended, I just feel like he had been doing that for days. Like, he was in the office like destroying things for two straight days and it just, he needed a break and a reset. I don’t know if that’s, If there was a better place for a student to be, that would be great, but I don’t feel like we have that in my school, so sometimes I think it’s necessary when a kid’s being really violent and destructive, just to have a reset.

You said, in school suspension if it’s facilitated. What would that ideally look like? Like, what would an ideal facilitated in school suspension look like?

Um, I think it would be like, it’s almost its own classroom um with a full-time adult that was in there to support the students, not only in like doing some school work but also um like resolving problems or making amends in some way for their problems um or any problems that they caused. Um, I feel like it would involve like counseling, which having a really effective counselor would be a big bonus. Um, because I just feel like there is more going on with a kid usually that needs that level of support than we can provide with just the classroom teacher and just an administrator in a disciplinary way. There’s usually more supports that are necessary that they are not getting.

Um, what kinds of things would you say would be good candidates for an in-school suspension?
I mean like, [sigh]...it’s like I can just picture it in my head...[chuckles]...I mean, I think if a kid is intentionally hurting other children or adults, like, I don’t know, I mean this year a lot of us have experienced that. Um, punching, kicking, hitting, kicking, spitting on adults, swearing at them, like that’s not something that the other kids should even see. Like that’s gotta be traumatizing to the other kids in the class to see their teacher or their principal or other adults in the building like being beaten on and sworn at, and kicked by a student. Um, I feel like it also tells the other kids that like it is not ok if there is some kind of way that, that’s like no that’s not ok, they will be in this other classroom like getting the help that they need to solve this problem or to like support this behavior. Like they are not just going to be in here again in an hour, or tomorrow.

You said, you mentioned, that in an in school suspension, in an ideal one, there would be counseling and that students would spend some time making amends for whatever the problem or the issue was. Tell me more about the making amends. What would that look like, or what would the product be?

I mean, if a kid has destroyed things, I think that they need to find a way to either put them back together or help clean it up. Um, if they’re hurting people, they need to apologize in a sincere way. Uh...I just feel like, it’s more like natural consequences I guess, but, just thinking in the real world, if I like were to hit someone, I would apologize. [chuckles] If I were to accidently ruin something of theirs, I would either replace it or try and fix it. And I just feel like it’s a way to teach that. It’s just like the natural consequence of life I guess.

Do you think the making amends process is important for any kind of relationship rebuilding?

Yeah. I absolutely do, because I think that’s a big part of forgiveness. Um, and, especially for kids, if like, another student has done something to them and they never get any apology, I don’t think, I mean, eventually, they don’t want to be associated with that person, they don’t want to be friends with that person. Um, and I feel like that can really harm the classroom community when you have that going on, especially like over and over again.

Tell me more about the counseling. What would that look like?

Um, I feel like, if you have a counselor that was really effective and good at connecting with the kids, I just feel like that could be someone that could help facilitate some of that and um teach skills at least for deescalating or different ways you can respond when you are feeling a certain way, rather than hurting someone or swearing at them, or destroying someone’s property or the room, or hurting yourself. Like what else could you do. I think like um just teaching those strategies over time.

As of now, like when students are suspended, would you say that is effective at changing behavior?
Um...I think in older grades, it’s less effective, because I think that they don’t necessarily want to be there. I think in younger grades it can be more effective just because younger kids, in my experience, are more likely to want to be at school and want to be around their peers and their teacher. Um, it also just depends on the parents’ response at home...like, if they went home and got a beating, they might be really good for a couple of days. If they go home and they play videogames all day, they’re gonna not think twice about getting suspended. I think a lot of it depends on the response they get at home, which we have no control over.

What about long term? You said, if they go home and get a certain response, they may be really good for a few days. What about long term?

I haven’t seen anything long term. I’ve maybe seen like a behavior stop, but not overall behavior.

Ok. Um, what about... tell me a little bit more about older kids, and why you think it wouldn’t be as effective or might not be as purposeful?

Um, I think that older kids are more likely to just not like want to be at school, and a lot of times kids that have like extreme behaviors also do not, aren’t successful at school and do not enjoy it. Especially thinking of like middle school, high school, I mean a parent... If a kid gets suspended, I feel like they wouldn’t have like any supervision, they’d just be left at home. Versus like a 5, or 6, or 7 year old, they would like have to be at home with them...hopefully...um, and so I feel like, then they are just at home for the day to do whatever, and I don’t think that’s like a deterrent for some kids.

Um, what are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think efforts at reducing suspensions within the district or within the school have been effective?

Um, I think that with the right supports, it’s really, really possible, and a really good thing. I think the middle school and high schools, from what I’ve heard, have done a better job at setting up a classroom where you can have a successful in school suspension. Elementarys, especially a small one like ours, we don’t have the support staff. I mean, the people that can deal with it, we have, a principal and an EA. But at a bigger school, you would also have an AP, and you might also have a full-time counselor, and there would be more support for that kind of thing. Um, a lot of it falls on people that it’s not their job...like the office manager...it’s not her job necessarily to support in, yet she does. So I feel like we could reduce it, if we had an alternative, and like a good, structured way to set it up. And, if it’s not set up, it’s going to be really hard to reduce...because there is no one to deal with it. Except kids sitting in the office all day doing nothing unsupervised.

So, what is the alternative to reducing suspensions? What’s been communicated?
I haven’t... I don’t really know. I feel like in like middle school and high school, they have like a success center or an in-school suspension place, and I haven’t heard a plan for a school like ours. I mean, our EA takes a lot on. She does a lot, a lot more, than the EA we had last year for example. Um, it feels like very different this year than it did last year, because I do really feel like she takes it on herself. Um, but I mean, even that, she does have like a small office, and it’s not set up to accommodate more than like two kids at a time, you know? So, um, I feel like to really decrease suspension we need a better structure, and like a place, a better place for it. And maybe more adults.

What’s been communicated at the school level about suspensions, and reducing it, or behavior or discipline?

Um, I feel like I understand that over the last 3,4, 5 years, we are reducing suspensions district-wide. And I know in our school, I guess I don’t know what they looked like before those goals were in place. Um, I know that this year, there are more suspensions than there were last year, because I feel like, we have a different voice in the building that is saying, like, at a certain point, you need to do something about this. You can’t just let them sit in the office and destroy things and... I don’t know. It just depends on, I feel like there were more suspensions this year than there were last year.

Tell me more about what you mean when you say there is a different voice.

Our EA this year is um, not just on board 100% with like, we won’t suspend anyone. Like, I feel like there is a line that is kinda like drawn of like, if they’re being um like repeatedly unsafe and like destroying things and like just violent, they do need a suspension. Like I feel like that’s what I’m noticing this year.

And how is that different from previous years?

I mean, last year, I feel like the only kid that ever got suspended, like in the last couple of years, were like if they were on the path towards like a behavior IEP. Or on the path to a different placement. Those kids, their behavior was extremely well documented, they did have suspensions, and other than that, no one else did.

So, what happened with all of the other kids or behaviors?

I don’t know... they hung out in the office and bothered our office manager. I don’t know. I just feel like, at least when those goals were new, there may have been some principals that took a hard line, and were like, ok, we are not going to suspend, we are not doing to do this, and there was no data recorded. And I feel like this year, with some new things in place, we are trying to record more data around minor discipline, as well as more major discipline. Um, which is just something we haven’t done at our school since those goals were put into place.
Recording data. Tell me what you mean.

Um, like, we have these little forms, like FYI forms, but every adult has, not just on the playground. Like, I know that those existed before, so basically any behavior that I deal with, we are just like kinda recording it. So like, minor behavior, this is the student and the grade. Like, pick one behavior, where it happened, and like what I did about it. So we are just recording it, even like after the fact, just to collect data around like, where the behavior is happening, and what are teachers or other people doing about it. So it’s not just like, if I call the office and the student needs to be removed, it’s like, did I have two kids, who like, I need to have a conversation with at recess, and do something to fix the problem in class. And if I do that, and I take the time to do that, then I just record it and send it to the office. So we are like trying to get a better idea of like where we actually have behaviors, because our behavior data from the past looks like nothing ever happens, which isn’t true.

And why is that?

I just think there was no system in place to record anything that was happening. And it looks like, like basically you can tell, it looks like there are two kids in the whole school that have any behavior issues if you look at last year or the year before. And that’s not accurate. Because I feel like everyone...all the data was honed in on, for kids that like... like a student that maybe they were trying to place into EBC, or a student they were like trying to get on a behavior IEP, they have data recorded around all of their behaviors. And there wasn’t really a way....teachers were not recording other behavior. I feel like it...I feel like this acknowledges that teachers do deal with a lot of the minor behaviors, but they are still happening.

What happens with the data?

Um...we just for the first time kind of like got a graph of it, just to show school-wide where are they happening, when are they happening, like are there spikes in it...um, what types of behaviors. And also students...I think that [EA]’s new philosophy is that, or not philosophy, her new system that we are trying, is that any kid that ends up with three FYI’s in a month, like, then that teacher probably needs more support. So, it’s just identifying that there’s needs, so we can actually address it. And I just feel like, and this is my 7th year at this school, and I’ve never seen a system that actually... I mean, we used to have of course, the behaviors that were recorded, but I feel like it wasn’t on teachers as much as it was the office and the recess staff, and now I feel like it’s being taken on more like by everyone, which is more representative of what actually happens. Cause I feel like before there were like the problem solving sheets, and then the conduct reports...and I don’t think that people were filling those out. [chuckles] I just don’t think it was happening. And this is more just like an informal, I already dealt with it, here’s what happened, but I already dealt with it, and I feel like people are starting to take it on...which feels like a positive change in our school.

In what way? That teachers are taking it on?
I think that teachers are taking it on, and it acknowledges that we have more problems than just like the couple Tier 3 kids in each grade, and that teachers need support in other ways... or with different kids. Maybe like lower level supports, but there is a need. And just because we only have minimal behavior data, it doesn’t mean that there is just minimal behavior going on. So, I feel like the data just has to reflect what is actually happening, and we are getting closer to that.

*Ok. Tell me what you know about restorative justice.*

My understanding of restorative justice is that it is um, a philosophy around discipline, but also a process. So, um, anytime that um, someone does something that, I mean, a wrong I guess, that they make it right. Like that they, go through a process of like acknowledging who they impacted and how they impacted them. They go through a process of like problem solving with that person, whoever was involved in it. Um, and so, I guess, my...I, I understand that, like, I understand the philosophy around it... I don’t understand as much about like how to implement it. It feels like that kind of process could be really, really powerful, but I guess I don’t see how we would have time in the classroom setting to do it. So that’s like kind of where my understanding falls away, because I understand like maybe as a school how we could implement it, but not necessarily what my role would be in it...if that makes sense.

*Mhmm. How have you learned about your learnings of restorative justice?*

I mean, conversations. I’ve talked to a friend who knows about it a decent amount I feel like. [Our principal] bought us each a book, the Sticks and Carrots book, you may know it? So we all have that, and we’ve read like one excerpt from it as a staff. We probably will be reading more of it, but so far, I mean, I have only read what she’s asked us to read, so I have not like gone ahead. But um, I know, I know that we are going to learning more about it as a whole staff, cause I don’t....I think it’s something that people take bits and pieces of, but my understanding is that it is a much more systematic process and like philosophy, so I am having a hard time sometimes if like our administrator says, like, oh, well we believe, this, and we do this...but we don’t do that. I mean, we don’t do restorative justice. Like, she can say this, but we don’t have anything in place to support it. So, I feel like sometimes it gets thrown around a little bit, but from my understanding of it, which is not deep or in detail, but more of an overall understanding, we are not capable of implementing it in like what we have or have had in the past at our school. Like, we will. But right now, I feel like saying that like that’s what we do, is not accurate.

*So when someone says that that’s what you do, and it’s not accurate, what components maybe are said that they are being done or like, what is being tied to restorative justice?*

I feel like...[sigh]...and I’m not on our PBIS team but I know most of these conversations are from PBIS, from the team. Last year, most of this happened on the team. Like, people would be asking about like how to deal with a behavior or how a behavior maybe was dealt with, and an administrator would say, well that’s not a restorative justice practice. And everyone was like,
but what’s restorative justice, and is that like something we are actually doing as a staff? Like, you can’t say, no, we aren’t doing that because it’s not restorative justice, if that’s not what restorative justice actually is. I don’t know if that makes sense.

No, it does.

Like, I feel like it was an answer of like, we don’t do this because it’s not restorative justice, but then there was no defined definition of what restorative justice was. Or like, because that’s obviously what it is, and like our school has a thorough understanding of it and of this process and philosophy and that’s why we don’t do it, it was just like, that’s not restorative justice. And everyone said, well, I guess we don’t understand what restorative justice is.

Ok. Um, with what you’ve learned about restorative justice, what the responses defined as restorative or not restorative have been within the building, like, what are your thoughts and feelings about restorative justice?

I think that it is really intriguing to me, and I think that I would love to see it in action. Um, I feel like it’s going to require a lot of support though for classroom teachers. From what my understanding, from what like a lot of it is, it sounds like a time consuming process, and involves a lot of people, like anyone involved in a problem has like a facilitated problem solving session and that’s not something that I, as a classroom teacher, see myself being able to do. So, for it to be in place, first, I think the whole staff needs to have a very clear understanding of all the aspects of restorative justice and what that means. Which I think is the first step, which I think, at least, buying this book, and maybe we are going to do a book study at some point, will at least maybe get people somewhat on the same page. But, um, I mean, I think that kinda like what I was saying how in school suspension needs to be very well supported, like they would go together. Like, if we were going to be able to have this like thorough problem solving process happen, we are going to need that same level of support. There needs to be an adult that the kids like know and trust that can facilitate it and communicate it back to teachers like what’s happened and what’s going on, and I don’t know. I don’t see how I would have time for that, in my school day unfortunately. Like, otherwise, you’d be using every lunch, every break, every planning, every before and after school, which you can’t really do with kids...like...I, I don’t see how I could facilitate it, but I see how at a school level it is possible. But kind of like suspensions, we need a person and a place and a, someone who is really skilled in that to facilitate it.

You kind of started to answer this, but, if you were to try restorative justice, either within your classroom or within your school, what support would you need?

Um, I think that...yeah, I think that we would need a whole school understanding, a whole staff, including paras, including everyone, cause everyone would need to be one the same page about it. Um...I think we would need at least one person that feels like comfortable facilitating those kind of problem solving um conversations. Um, in class I feel like we would need some around
like, if we could do some restorative justice type things like as part of like a class meeting type...um...I could see teachers being able to do that, but there also kinda needs to be like time set aside for that. Um, I have worked in buildings for short term in the past where every single class, the schedule is built around um that need, so every single class has like 20 minutes at the beginning of the day for a class meeting before any content or any specialists start. And that was an expectation school wide. If you had that built into your schedule, I could see being able to like actually have, you know, regular class meetings and like begin to build up those kinds of conversation skills, or um, where like you are problem solving as a class, like everyone has the language that they need because you are teaching it to the kids in the classroom before they are expected to like just go to the office and have some big, scary problem solving thing with an administrator or something. Um, so I feel like we need a schedule support, but also like some modeling, like a lot of modeling, around like kind of what we have done with implementing ruler...like over a couple years we’ve implemented different aspects of it...like, if we were going to do like a restorative justice class meeting something added to our classroom, that would have to modeled and like we would need help for the first couple years with like language and like the problem solving strategies and like....things like that...activities that would build that up.

Do you have a class meeting time now within your school schedule?

Uh no. Some teachers do it random days. I usually do...it’s more just like a mood meter check in and like a little check in...just on Fridays I have time. I don’t have time any other day. Um, I know that like one other teacher that does a class meeting I think on Mondays. So...but I don’t know of a lot of teachers that do.

So it’s not required?

It’s not a school wide expectation. It’s expected that we implement some kind of socio-emotional learning into every day, but that can be just...that can be very simple. There’s not like a... and I know some classes tried to implement like a daily thing, and then their schedule got changed. So now they no longer are able to. Or it got cut really short.

You spoke a little bit earlier about how maybe you’ve noticed that restorative justice is a bigger philosophy and process, and that sometimes bits and pieces are maybe pulled out and defined as restorative justice. What do you think...what are your thoughts about that happening? Do you think it’s ok if pieces are just pulled?

I think that it is...I feel like it can be ok if people actually understand like what it is. Um...it maybe feels like our administrator didn’t have a full understanding of it when she was calling those little bits and pieces out...because it didn’t fit with my more general understanding of it...like, I don’t know...I feel like, if everyone understood what it was, we could like pull bits of it, and maybe implement little bits at a time, but if you are like just pulling little bits, and just making statements about it without like supporting them or...I just feel like, if no one else in the building knows what you are talking about, it’s not impactful to use...like everyone has to know
what it is, or like it’s not going to matter. So if only one person in the building understands
restorative justice, then it’s never going to work. You have to have like everyone on board, in the
same way, before you can apply little bits of it. I kinda think.

Um...What was the reaction, either yours or others that you can speak to, when maybe a
situation arose behaviorally and people asked about what the response would be or what the
next step would be, and the term restorative justice was thrown around without this
understanding of what it is? What was the reaction from staff, or their feelings? Did it then
connotate something with restorative justice...or...?

I would say that um...people felt like nothing was happening. So, you’re saying...if an
administrator said, no that’s not an appropriate consequence or that’s not an appropriate reaction
because it’s not part of restorative justice...then the feeling was, so you’re not going to do
anything about it, or you’re going to do something that others may feel is like a reward for that
kid...like, they just...I feel like...it’s misconstrued a little bit because they see something
happening that doesn’t...that hasn’t been explained...so I feel like it does cause a rift...it’s like, oh
well the administrators are just dealing with this in like their own way that’s not supporting what
I need...or not supporting how the teacher thinks the kid should...their behavior should be responded to. So I feel like it does cause a rift between teachers and administration when
administration is like doing something that they aren’t explaining to the teachers...or they are
taking parts of something but not like the whole philosophy.

Ok. Do you feel like the push back was on that like lack of understanding of what was going on
or do you feel like it was people knew what restorative justice was and were like, no, that’s not
how I want you to respond?

I think that it’s more the former...that um...people didn’t understand what restorative justice was
and so I feel like getting like a little snit bit of...like, so you’re saying that we follow this
restorative justice philosophy...this is what I see you doing...so that must be what restorative
justice is, when that’s not representative of the whole thing. And so, I think it wasn’t more...I know what it is, and this is not it...It was more like, I don’t know what it is, but if this is what you think it is, I’m not down with that...because they don’t understand the whole picture.

And what was that thing that they saw associated with it?

I am just trying to think. I feel like um...I’m trying to think of an example. I feel like it was um
maybe kids just being in the office like having breaks or getting treats or something like this
that...I’m not really sure because it wasn’t an experience that I had. But I feel like it was
something related to that. I’d hear teachers say, oh they are just in there like eating hot
Cheetos...[chuckles]...or they are just going down and having a snack, and then coming back, and
then nothing happens.

What would maybe teachers want to have happen?
I don’t know. [chuckles] I’m not sure. I feel like something that was more purposeful, like a consequence or... this is hard, this would be a better question for someone that was at one of those meetings, because I was not. Someone on the PBIS team would know more about what was happening.

Ok. What’s the conversation been like this year about it?

I think people overall just feel much, much more supported with their behaviors...and I feel like it’s very obvious that we are trying to get our data to match what’s actually happening so we can even understand what behavior needs we have in our school. Um, and so I feel like we have some positive forward motion around data...and I think people know that we are going to be learning about restorative justice and that seems like a positive...we just aren’t there yet. We are just at the very beginning of this. Like, we are going to be doing a book study to learn about it. Um... I don’t know what supports we will have...like, with in school suspension type things...or like facilitating this um...like the problem solving stuff. I don’t know what we will be able to figure out in the future...um...I just feel like overall, everyone is much more supported and much happier with the response we are getting from our admins. It feels different.

And is that because there’s a response? Or because...like, why does it feel so different?

Um...it feels like we are getting a response, and it’s much more...it’s communicated in a much more supportive way...um...it’s more consistent...and I feel like...um...I don’t know how to say this...I don’t know...I mean, I feel like it’s the difference of one person, like, that can really change the culture of like how we respond to things. And um...last year I know people felt like they couldn’t call for help because they’d just get shut down. Or they were treated like they should be able to handle this, and why do they need help with this. Um, and this year, I feel like there is just more trust. Like, if I call the office, they’re going to trust that I actually need help and they’re going to support me in that. Um...and that just wasn’t the case last year.

Just based on your knowledge and what you’ve learned so far...what do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, for restorative justice to be effective within a school?

Um...I think that just like implementing anything...implementing a socio-emotional curriculum for the last three years...we are...right now um...we are working on the skill of close reading complex text...just like we are implementing any of these things...we need ongoing like professional development, whole staff, like all together. So, right now it feels like it would be a lot to implement something like this, just because we already have a couple things that we are kinda in the air with right now. I feel like it would have to be a full building focus for a couple years and we would need...um...we would need to probably like read about it...and like watching videos and things...just to get an understanding of it. And then I just think we would need a lot of training and modeling and practicing, like for a couple of years. We would need an ongoing...ongoing support....like implementing it...like the way we would for any other
curriculum or instructional skill or socio-emotional philosophy...like we would need that with this too.

So then what’s your feeling about having this book...that you may or may not be reading...how does that play into like...you said something that to implement this, we are already implementing other things, and this would be another thing that we’d have to learn and implement...then, where does this low level learning, maybe reading a book about it, fall into that?

I think if we can at least get a general understanding as a staff of what restorative justice is, then it would prepare us for a conversation or training around it, but...I mean...yeah, it does feel low level right now. We need to just get on the same page. We especially need like classified staff and certificated to be on the same page. I think that’s really important because they see the kids a lot of the time, and there’s often like a gap between that just because our learnings are different and so...um....I don’t know... I feel like it’s just like step one and we would have to...like, maybe we can do some low level learning this year, and if we’re gonna focus on it next year, we are gonna have to...the learning would really have to start like in the summer. So, we can do some low level learning, but that’s what it is to me. It’s like the baseline.

Let’s say you come back from break and your principal says, we are doing restorative justice. What would your response be? What would you be thinking? What questions would you have?

Um, I would probably want to ask her for what her definition of it is...like, how do you define it? And like, what do you mean, we are doing that now? Like, what does it mean for our school and behavior management system? Like, I would like to know a very thorough explanation. I’d want to know like what she means by that...and like, if there are aspects that we want to start implementing, I think people, if they at least had an understanding of it, would be open to it...but like, I would really want to know like what it’s going to look like and like who’s going to support in all the problem solving and like how can we use this in our classrooms. Like, a lot of people...I can visualize how it could be possible, I just think it would take a lot of time, and support, and research to figure it out. But I think it’s possible...it’s doable for sure...but, it’s not happening right now because we have a lot of other things that I feel like we are very focused on.

If you could design your dream response to behavior in a school, what would that entail?

I...I mean, I keep picturing this success center, or whatever you want to call it, where like a kid...kids...it’s like not a place you go where you are in trouble, but it’s like a place you can take a break and reset, you can work through a problem, you can have an alternate setting if you can’t function in your classroom. It has like adults in it that can like help you solve your problems and figure out strategies to deescalate and help you with your school work and like...it’s like this safe place. That would be really awesome to have in school. But, I have never seen one actually function in a school I’ve worked in...so...it’s just like something I am picturing in my head. But I don’t know if it’s feasible, or realistic, or if does exist in place. I think in middle schools and high schools it does, but I don’t know about elementarys.
Describe what all would a success room entail? What would they do?

Um...I think a lot of it would be like...and part of it, if it’s an in school suspension, like, you would also need to like have some support in some school work. But, yeah, I think like any restorative practices like problem solving or like making amends in some way...writing an apology, figuring out ways to solve conflicts that have come up. I mean, I don’t really know...that would be part of it. Um.. I’m not totally sure.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs, thoughts, opinions, about student behavior, discipline, suspensions, restorative justice that you would like to share or that you think would be helpful to the study?

I am not sure right now.

Alright, thank you. That’s it!

Teacher 2 [Pseudo Name Laurie]; Female; 22 years; 1st year teacher
12/18/17; 10:00am; Interviewed by Kaitlyn Spore
Currently teaching 2nd grade

KS: Ok, to start, can you state your name and acknowledge that you are being recorded.

2: My name is [Laurie] and I acknowledge that I am being recorded.

Ok, so the first one is, when a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? And do you think your response is effective? And how do you know that?

Um, I think it just depends on the student and what type of behavior it is. Um...so for like a minor misbehavior, like they’re talking while I’m talking, or like something like that...I just do like a warning system...like first check or whatever is a warning, and the next one is like you lose recess and etcetera it goes on. And then, they can always earn it back. And so, like nine times out of ten they earn it back and it’s like they’re aware of what they did and you know. My goal is for them to turn their behavior around. Um...and that’s for like minor like tier one, two kids that just works for them. Um...is it effective? Not always. I don’t think anything is effective all the time. Um...but it works for the majority I would say. And then um...I guess just the reason I know is because they earn it back somehow or their behavior changes in some way. Um, for more severe misbehaviors, I would say that I often um...like try to have a conversation with the student and if often times will like get transferred to the office...like...um...somebody from the office will come to support so that like I can focus on my class while the other kid gets the support that he or she needs.
What distinguishes for you tier one, tier two behaviors and kind of the higher tier 3 behaviors. 
Can you describe some of those types of things?

It’s been a really hard...it’s been like a really grey area for me. Like, this year, I’m not quite sure yet, but the kid has a lot to do with it. Like I think there have been a few kids that have been like...I’ve been told like if this happens with this kid, call the office, that kind of a thing. Umm...but I think just like, if it’s disrupting everybody’s learning, and I don’t feel like I have the ability to stop it, then I guess that’s just when I go to...like when I think it’s just a tier two or a tier one...and then I think like if it’s dangerous, or unsafe, then that’s like a tier three. That’s kind of how I’ve been um distinguishing them. But it’s been tough this year...like I don’t really know what a tier two or tier three is, and like what the difference is.

You said sometimes you might have a conversation with a kid. What does that conversation look like, or what’s your goal with the conversation?

Um...again, it like kinda depends on the kid. But like, just for example, one kid, like I know like he’ll respond really...like he like knows what he did...like he has remorse for the things that he does...so like, I’ll just ask him, why did you do this? Did you think that was right? And I’ll have him reflect on it. Like...um...I try to have them reflect on it as much as I can as opposed to me telling them what they did was wrong or why it’s wrong or...um...so I do my best to have them reflect on it, and then in all honesty, there’s not always time for that. And then, I don’t want to like keep them in from recess or like I don’t want to like punish them. I don’t want them to feel like they are being punished just for talking to me about it. If I have time, I really try to have them reflect on it, but sometimes it takes a lot longer than others. And so, that’s what I try to do.

Ok. What do you believe is the purpose of disciplining a student, and also I am going to add on to that...how would you define discipline?

Uh...well I think the purpose of discipline is like in hopes to change their behavior, right...like in a long term, to change their behavior for the better. At least that is what I would hope the purpose of it is. Um...and discipline...I feel like the word discipline has like a negative, um, meaning behind it. But, I kinda just view it as a direction of behavior. But I think right now it’s just another work for trouble, like you’re in trouble, it’s kinda how it feels when I hear that word, so...but I would like to think of it as a redirection of someone’s behavior.

Ok. What do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline? What do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?

Um...for the teacher...I mean I think for both..I think your role needs to be consistent and if you’re a teacher and I think it’s to set expectations and then if those expectations are not met, then there is some form of discipline involved. Um...like, I’m holding you here, my expectation is here for you, and if you don’t meet that expectation there’s some sort of consequence or discipline of some kind. And then for an administration, I think...how I’ve seen it is when kids
cannot respond to your expectations or they for whatever reason are not succeeding in your
classroom, that’s when administrators step in. Umm…but I personally believe that the role of the
administrators should be with more students, and not just the really, really difficult ones um
because then it would be more consistent for all kids. But I’ve seen it just with my really, really
tough kiddos.

What does that look like, in terms of when an administrator comes in and then what would it look
like then kinda in your own belief around them being more involved kind of across the board?

So, in my class I looks like um…it’s a warning systems so like if you do this, then the office is
gonna have to come kind of a thing. So it’s more of like a threat it feels like…so, if you do this,
the office is going to come. Umm…and then they come, and then the kid is either removed or
they like take a break with someone right next to them from the office. Umm…and so it feels
like it’s very much a threat, like, if you do this, like this is going to happen. And I think that
causes a lot of anxiety in kids, or like a fear, of like my parents are going to get called or
whatever it is. But, if the office was more um…not that they should be, but if they were able to
like more involved in everybody’s behavior, um…like if there were more people, it seems like,
then it wouldn’t cause this like high stress and anxiety for kids. Umm…but I don’t know what
that would look like because I have never seen it like that, but it’s like kinda a wondering that
I’ve had.

What are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student
discipline? Why or why not?

To be honest, I am not really sure, because I think that a lot of kids that would um…be like in this
category of being suspended um...maybe like it’s not necessarily going to help them. But, for
some kids it would be effective but not for all. Umm...so I don’t really like the idea of
suspension as a general...like in general I don’t really because I don’t think that it’s...just, if a kid
is acting up at school then like chances are that they aren’t enjoying school, and so they don’t
want to be at school, and so then you’re saying, ok, you don’t have to be at school today.
Um…but then also I think that there’s some behaviors that like do...that kinda do deserve a
suspension, but I think in general I don’t like the idea of suspension in mass quantities I guess.
Um...so I would say like in general, I don’t really agree with it. In school suspension is different,
but I don’t agree with like suspension too much. And then yeah, just because I think that if a kid
is acting up then I think that there’s more to it, and sending them home for a day, or more than a
day, is not necessarily the answer.

Ok. You used the word effective at first when you were describing that, like you didn’t think it
was effective. Tell me more what you mean by that. Tell me a little bit more.

UH...well I think that if you are misbehaving in school, then your behavior, it should be...like you
should be taught how to behave at school, instead of saying like oh you did this, so you can’t
come back for this amount of days. So, I don’t think it’s teaching them how to act appropriately,
I think it’s just telling them that what they did is wrong, but not why, or a different way to respond to it would be or a different act is or so, I think in that sense it’s not effective. Like, they know they’re in trouble, and that part of it is very clear, but what they should do or what they did wrong is not necessarily clear because they aren’t learning anything else other than, oh, I did this and I got in trouble.

You also mentioned there being a difference between in school suspension and out of school suspension. Can you tell me more on what your thoughts are around that?

I think the way I’ve seen in school suspension has not been super effective, because it’s just a kid stuck in the office all day because there’s nobody um...it’s just...they’re like given no attention in the office, so they are just like kinda sitting there, bored. Um...and then I hear a lot of people saying, like, oh, this is boring, isn’t it? You don’t want to do this again, do you? So I think an alternative in school suspension would be like you’re in school like talking about what you did and what you could have done...like reflecting on why you are there, and not just like you are stuck there. Because I’ve had a kid that’s had an in school suspension a couple times, and he comes back not knowing what happened...like, he just come back like, oh, I had a break for a day or a day long break is what he thinks of it. And that’s obviously not what it is...and so I think if there was more structure around in school suspension, like your reflecting on what you did and kinda like even problem solving what you could do next time if this situation happens again. I think that there’s a more um...more effective way to have in school suspension.

So, the student that comes back thinking that they just had a day break, what is their behavior like when they come back? Do you see an increase or a decrease in behavior, or does it just kind of depend?

The student is pretty inconsistent so it’s pretty hard to say, but the day that he comes back is usually...fine...like I can’t think of anything crazy that’s happened on the day he comes back, but it definitely does not change his behavior long term. Um...the one thing that’s changed his behavior that I’ve noticed is that he’s gained...like he’s grown a relationships with um two adults in the building and so...when he takes a break, he goes to them. But like, the in school suspension aspect of it I don’t think has made a huge difference. I think that he gets in trouble at home because of it and there’s an element of fear involved in it, but not like a reflective...like...I’m going to change my behavior. He doesn’t come back like wanting to change his behavior by any means. He doesn’t come back with like an escalated behavior either...so, he just comes back himself.

Ok. What are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think efforts at reducing suspensions within your district or school have been effective?

I’m kinda conflicted, because I really do like the idea of reducing suspensions, but not at the cost of like not...um...addressing behavior. I don’t like the idea of like, well, we can only have this number of suspensions, so we cannot suspend this time, but next time we can. Like, if it happens
again, then we will. Because, like, it’s not consistent for the kids is what I’ve seen. It’s like, well, he hit a kid this time, but if he does it again, then we’ll suspend him because they just wanna keep this number low. I think that like, in this district, there was a big, hefty goal of like a certain percentage of suspensions or something, and I think that there were a lot of kids that should have been disciplined that weren’t...um...from what I’ve seen. But, I do really like the idea of long-term reducing the suspension rate, but there needs to be like a redirection of behavior, as opposed to just like, we’re just not going to suspend anyone. Like...um...an effort to like change behavior, as opposed to just changing the discipline around it I guess. I think they should go like, hand in hand, as opposed to just not disciplining or giving a consequence to anything.

Being a new teacher and coming into the district when they were in the middle of this effort, how was that communicated to you? What was the communication around student behavior, discipline, suspension?

Um, it wasn’t. I would say it wasn’t communicated at all. I think it was like mentioned in a few like really lengthy meetings, just like the overall goals, not necessarily around suspension, but like the whole 2020 goals, it was just thrown into the mix in one of those very long meetings. But there was never like a meeting or a conversation about what discipline looks like or anything like that.

What do you think about that?

Um...I wish that I would have been given more training, like definitely around discipline, and like how to handle it on my own in the classroom. Because, especially when I was student teaching, we didn’t really have any behavior issues, like at all really. And then this year I walked into a class full of them, and so I did not really know how to respond to them. And I think if I would have responded differently in the first two months of school, I would have set myself up a lot better than I did. Um...and I would have been more successful earlier on than figuring it out later and kinda problem solving and back tracking from what I already...I didn’t really know what to do. So I think just training around that would have been nice. Not even district...not even like about the district goals or anything, but just about like basic classroom management with really difficult kids would have been nice.

Ok. What about communication at the school level around discipline and policies and response?

I would still like more of that. Like I was saying, like with Tier one, two, and three, it’s so confusing to me. I have to ask my teaching partner like all the time, like, is this kid a tier two? Why do you think they’re a tier three? Yeah...I have to constantly ask. Uh...and so I would love to have more communication on what supports I am able to get for each kid and who to go to for that, and what forms do I need to get, and all this...because I feel like I go to one person all the time, and I think that she just takes it on, cause she is great, but I think that I am like putting too much on her because she is the only person I know to go to.
You’ve used the words like tier one, tier two, tier three a lot. Everyone has their own definition of those. Are those terms that are used within your building? Are they used to describe not only behaviors, but also responses to behaviors as well? Like, is there plans in place around this is what we do with a tier two or a tier three, or is it just kind of like language that is used to describe?

That is a good question. I believe...well, my understanding is that...and this could be wrong, because like I said, I am not fully clear on it...but from my understanding, is that there are different levels of behavior and that they do have like different types of responses. Tier one from my understanding is like a gen...like the majority of students...like it’s things like procedures, and those are the responses to tier one kids...those are just your average classroom behaviors. And then responses to tier two are like...I have like a meeting with all of these people about what I would call like tier two people...the tier two kids I mean...and so the responses to those are different because they are more severe. And so, my understanding of it is very general, but what I get is that the behaviors in tier one, tier two, tier three...they increase as they go up, and then the responses also increase to match the behaviors. So, does that answer your question.

Yeah. I was just curious how it was defined in your building. Ok, tell me what you know about restorative justice.

Um, I really wish I could tell you a lot more, but I don’t know a whole lot about restorative justice. I know that it’s related to discipline and that it’s kinda an outlook on how we discipline kids. Um...and I’ve heard about it in terms of reducing suspension, like within my building and people I’ve talked to about it. But, I guess what I understand about it is that it’s just like a way to get...um...like a way to match the crime to the discipline I guess, and like to have kids really work through it on their own. They use problem solving skills and they match...they...like use what they’ve learned and kinda what they bring to solve their own problems and it’s a way to like dispute these behaviors and make them go...minimize. So I wish I could tell you a whole lot more about it...um...but it’s a word that gets thrown around my building a lot, but I’ve never really learned a lot about it.

Thrown around by who?

Umm...administrators I would say. It’s like, they talk about the books they’ve read about it, and like in meetings they talk about it...like they just throw it around...like, we are working on restorative justice, like that kind of a thing, and I feel like I’ve never...I just hear the word a lot...I hear the phrase and I hear things that go along with it and I know that like it has to do with discipline and it has to do with behavior, but I am not sure what exactly they are talking about.

So, with whatever you know about restorative justice, or have heard, or in context, what are your initial thoughts and feelings about restorative justice?
Um...well, I feel confused a little bit...[chuckles]...but, um, from what I’ve heard about it and from the people who have talked to me about it...um, I think that it’s great, but I don’t want to speak too highly or too low about it, because I don’t know a lot about it. Um...and so, my thoughts are mostly like curiosities...I just have a lot of questions about it...what it looks like, and how it’s implemented, and so...but I mean, my feelings are good about it because I’ve not heard anything bad about it.

Ok. When you say you think it’s great, what about what you’ve heard makes you think it would be great?

I think just the people who’ve talked with me about it, I trust them, and I know that like I have...similar mindsets as them...the people I’ve been talking to about it. So I think that, like when it’s just thrown around in meetings, like the context behind it is...I agree with. So, my initial thought is like, oh, well, if I agree with everything we are saying, then I probably agree with restorative justice and what it looks like. Yeah.

Ok. When you say you agree with the context behind it, what is the context behind it?

Um...well we talk...well, when it’s brought up, are talking about like social emotional learning and just talking about being like culturally responsive and so I agree with like everything we are talking about in like those contexts, and being more culturally responsive in the classroom and stuff...that’s when it’s been brought up, and so, yeah, I’ve just been kinda like, well, I would probably agree with that if I knew more about it.

Ok. Also, you said that people who were saying kind of like low level information about it with you, and people that tend to be people you have similar mindsets to. Tell me about that a little bit more, and like what would somebody with a different mindset be thinking?

Um...well, I guess I’ve talked to my principal about it...I haven’t talked to her about this, but I’ve talked with her about being culturally responsive, like I had like a mini-interview with her and stuff, and that’s all we really talked about...um...and so she has been the person that will kind of like, bring it up here and there in meetings and such, and since I know that I agree with her on what being a culturally responsive teacher looks like...that’s something different, but I kinda just kind of put them together...and so, I agree with her on being culturally responsive, and so restorative justice...I guess I will kind of trust her going into that. But, someone with a different mindset, I have no idea what that would look like because I don’t really fully understand what restorative justice looks like either.

Ok. Are there people you would say that have different mindsets just in general around discipline or culturally responsive teaching?

Not at my school, but in my life, yeah. Like, my parents...like people that aren’t really in education I think...yes. [chuckles] It would be very different...like, for example, my parents
don’t really understand anything about education, like they do, but they went to school a long
time ago and it’s a lot different. So when I talk to them, their opinions are like, well, just kick
them out. They shouldn’t be in your school. You shouldn’t let them be in your class. So that’s
like a very polar opposite mindset…it’s like, well, they hit a kid, so they need to be kicked out of
that school. That would be a mindset that I would definitely not identify with.

Ok. Tell me more about...because it sounds like restorative justice has maybe sometimes been
lumped into culturally responsive teaching, how would you describe culturally responsive
teaching?

Um...I would just describe it...I mean, there’s different...so I think about it in the different levels
of it...and so, I just think of it as though you are bringing like students’ cultures and their beliefs
and you are like integrating it into teaching...and so you are able to reach them more effectively
and in different ways. And so, you aren’t just like teaching an um...a group of kids...it’s like not
a traditional way...it wouldn’t look traditional I guess. And so, you bring in things that they’re
familiar with, that they believe, like songs and dances and whatever they might be comfortable
with, and you’re delivering them..um...like all this information in ways that make sense to them,
as opposed to ways that make sense to me.

Ok. How does that play into discipline? Or how it has been brought up in terms of discipline?

Um...I don’t...well, I am not sure how it has been brought up I guess. But, how I’ve related it to
discipline, is just that I just think of these kids and how they get disciplined at home, and how
different that looks at school. Um...and that’s probably, for a lot of kids, like, even the way I see
their parents interact with them....and it’s not negative, or positive, it’s just their
interactions...and it’s very different than how a teacher interacts with them or how somebody at
school interacts with them...and so, making that match something more to what it looks like at
home or what they’re used to, or making them connect like...connect themselves...like, I don’t
know. I guess, just making it more comfortable and recognizable to them.

Ok. You said, your mindset, your attitude, it differs than maybe your parents around discipline,
like their belief is that the kids need to be kicked out of school. What do you think for you has
made that difference? Like, why is your attitude about it different than your parents or maybe
someone else who has a different attitude is?

Um...I don’t know...I think a part of it is just my personality. But, then I think also, school was a
lot different for them. Like, I think that’s how it was for them when they were in school, and
then when I was in school...the behaviors in my classroom when I was younger were not nearly
what they are now. I think that it’s just become this like norm of....well, this is just how kids act
now. Like this would be like kicking everyone out type of thing. Um...but then I also think that
there is a level of compassion...and I want to understand these kids. I don’t want just kick them
out and...so I think it’s a bunch of different things, but I think it’s just something they’ve
never...they’re not used to or have never been exposed to...I think is the most prominent reason.
So, you are speaking about your parents and saying they just don’t have experience in the classroom, so maybe that’s why they kind of have a different attitude about it. What would you say about, or guess around, teachers who have a similar attitude as your parents do? Like, let’s say there is a teacher who has a similar attitude as your parents, like, a student misbehaves and they need to be kicked out. Why do you think they would think or feel that?

Um...honestly because they are probably burnt out. They’ve probably had a lot of kids do that same thing, year after year, and they aren’t seeing any...um...changes or they’re not seeing their behavior change. Or even like...there’s a lot of talk in my building about how every classroom has a behavior...like, every classroom has a tough kid or a few or whatever...so I think that if you get that year after year after year, and nothing is changing and the behaviors are just staying really difficult, then I think it would be really easy to get into that mindset of, well, whatever we are doing is not working and they need to leave. And so I think just being burnt out would be a huge part of it.

Ok. You talk a lot about wanting to change behavior and like how that would be the goal. Have you found...I know this is your first year of teaching...but what have you found to be really effective in changing behavior? You spoke about a few things earlier, but I’m curious if you had to just highlight a few things you have noticed that have really helped, or maybe not causing a complete change, but maybe are impacting in a positive way. What would you call out as being important?

Um...I think first and foremost, having a relationship with the kids is the most important in changing their behavior cause even as an adult, if I don’t like someone, chances are, I’m not going to want to change who I am for them. So, I mean, as a kid...it’s probably definitely like that. You know...you need to like who...who...who you’re surrounded by to even feel influenced to change anything. So I think having a relationship with kids is the most important for sure.

Ok. Anything else?

Oh, well, I mean there’s a lot of factors, but...consistency, I think is key, because if...they get in trouble for something one day and then they do the same thing the next day and they don’t get in trouble, then...they are going to be really confused on what’s expected of them. So, consistency...and then, um...I don’t know what it would be called, I guess equity...but, they need to understand why what they are doing is not acceptable or why...you can’t just be like, well, you can’t scream because I said so. There has to be an explanation and a reason...a justifiable reason behind it. So I think those three things play the biggest part in behavior change.

Ok...Alright, if you were to try restorative justice, given what you know about it or what you’ve heard...in your classroom or in your school, what support would you need? And you can base this is off of whatever you’ve heard about what restorative justice might be. If you were going to try it with whatever you know it to be right now, what kind of support would you need?
Um...definitely some training on behind what it is...but for me, what helps the most is seeing something in action, or, seeing examples of this is what it looks like in action...these are the steps you need to take...so seeing it...well, getting training on what it is and the ins and outs of it, but then also examples of...um...like where it’s been used in the same grade level as I am in. Because I feel like with some trainings that like we’ve been doing, not around this at all, but like different things...there’s an example of like a sixth grade teacher doing it, but I can’t find myself applying it to my class at all. And so, that really is a huge thing, seeing it in action in the same age group that I’m teaching...um...is something that I would really need. And also just um...training to learn what it actually is.

Let’s pretend we are talking about the Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 responses...and you were just talking about that in general...what would training like, or be the most effective for you as a teacher, if you were to implement a new behavior system? If you could describe the perfect training...in terms of how long it is, how frequent it is...who does it, whose involved, what your involvement is...what would you say, as a new teacher, is the best or effective way so that you can be trained to implement it really well?

Um...I think, like a huge part of it is...like what I was saying...is being lumped with people that are in my same age group or grade band. Because, talking to a sixth grade teacher about it is helpful, but not nearly as helpful as talking with another second grade teacher about experiences they’ve had...so talking about that. Um...and then I think also like in a perfect world, and a perfect training world, being trained by somebody who knows the kids that I am dealing with and knows their behaviors, would be the most effective...um...because they can use really clear examples...like, oh, Timmy, you could do this for Timmy when he does this...or whatever...um...and so, in a perfect training world, having somebody that knows your kids and what behaviors you’re dealing with. And um...length wise, I think just long enough that...to get in depth on each...whether it’s a tier, or different behavior categories or whatever it might be...to get just in depth enough to really understand the behavior and the response I guess. So, I don’t know how long that would be, but long enough. [chuckles]

Let’s say you go back to school after break and your principal or someone in your building says, ok, we are going to start restorative justice...what would you be thinking, and what questions would you have? What would be going on in your head?

[chuckles] Umm...there would be a lot going on in my head. I would definitely ask for support right away and asking what this looks like, and what’s expected of me, in certain scenarios. So, like, there’s certain things that happen in my class like you know, weekly, every other day, or that kind of thing...like, they are pretty consistent. So I would ask things like, when this happens, what does it look like with restorative justice? What do I do? Um...so like, specific examples that I could apply to like other scenarios as well. Um...but there would be some panic happening in my head just because I am so unclear about it. But then so I would just ask her to really, really
clearly explain what it looks like and what is expected of me and what I should be expecting of my students.

Ok. What do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, for restorative justice responses to be effective?

Um...I think...from what little I know about it, I think, just teachers need to be on the same page. I think for any disciplinary like procedures, I think teachers and administration need to be on the same page so there’s a level of consistency with kids throughout the building. So, if I have a kid in my class, the discipline is the same when they’re at recess, or when they’re at lunch, or wherever, then it would be in my classroom. If they have the same expectations throughout, then the same responses to when that expectation is not met...so, whatever that would look like with restorative justice, I think that teachers need to be on the same page...very explicitly of what’s expected and what’s the response to not meeting the expectations.

What is the effect when teachers, or other people in the building, are not on the same page?

Um...I think, that’s when behavior issues occur. Like, the...just like a small example...if like kids are running in the hallway, if some teachers care and some teachers don’t, then kids are always going to test their luck and run in the hallways...so, it’s just a small example, but I think that kids need to know that if this is unacceptable, this is not acceptable anywhere, not just in here. Then there’s also like a level of...um...favoring certain teachers or favoring classrooms or whatever it might be...then you grow this like hatred toward your teacher because they’re so mean and you know...there’s a different level of respect that you get from students if you’re holding them accountable and other teachers are not.

What about, you speak about consistency a lot...what about consistency from administration?

I think that’s also very, very important. So I think consistency with how they...with how often they respond is really, really important, but I know that there’s a lot of other things going on, right? So...um...I totally get that...but I think their consistency on actually responding to calls or responding to issues...I think that’s really important. Um...but then also their consistency in what their response is, is really important. If the principal is coming to your room...and you are a student...they are coming for you and you have no idea what’s going to happen...are they in bad mood and they are going to suspend me...or are they in a good mood and they are just going to give me a break...then that creates like a whole new level of like fear and anxiety in a student. Where like if you know that she’s just coming to go on a walk and give me a break, then it’s like a...you know what to expect...and so I think that’s more effective...the more consistency the better.

You said something there that I am going to ask a little bit more on. You said, students might not know if the administrator or whoever is coming...if they are in a good mood, they might respond this way...if they are in a bad mood, they might respond that way. Um...is that something you
notice, or you think is like a need? Do you see that, or if you, you spoke a little bit about the
impact on kids, but what about the impact on teacher when...if it’s not a consistent thing?
Um...I don’t notice it from our administration really...but to honest, I know myself...I catch
myself in that...if, like, my patience is really low one day, I have to be super aware of it,
like...just because I do believe that being consistent is key for kids. And so, that’s something that
I like catch myself a lot in...like, I know that I am like really tired today, so I need to...so, I don’t
notice it really with administration, or I haven’t at all...but, I know that we are all like humans,
and so I know it is there.
So the last question is, is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs, your
thoughts, your opinions...about any of these things...student behavior, discipline, suspensions,
restorative justice, that you would like to share or think would be helpful to this study?
Um...I guess just that...like...I don’t know a lot about it at all, but I really wish that I did. And so,
just...I wish...I mean, I guess my school is not really implementing it or anything, but if they ever
do, or if they are thinking about it, I really hope that there’s...that I am able to learn lots more
about it. Um...is there anything else you want to know?
I’m just curious from something you said right there. What is your take on...your school is not
implementing restorative justice, yet, there are people in your building like talking about it, or
like throwing out the term...how do you balance those? How would you describe maybe where
your building is at with restorative justice?
Um...I have no idea, so I don’t really want to speak on it at all...but, I think that there’s so much
being implemented...it feels like all the time...that just the different things we’re expected to be
doing...that when this term is just like thrown around, I’m like...well, I am just going to wait until
they tell me that I have to do this because I am focusing on like A, B, and C right now...and like I
need to figure out how to do what she is asking me to do now, before I have to figure out what
she might be talking about in the future. So, I think that there’s a lot on our plates
already...especially for me, I guess I can’t really say we...I’m talking for myself....there’s a lot on
my plate I feel that I am being asked to do...and so, I find myself just not wanting to think about
this potential thing that’s probably going to be coming soon. So...and I don’t know where they
are at in like implementing...I don’t want to speak on that because I have like no idea.
One other thing...as a teacher, if you could describe or build your like ideal behavior response
system, within your classroom or within your school, what do you think needs to be in that
system and what would it look like? If you had whatever resources you needed....just your dream
response to student behavior...what would that look like?
Well, more people for sure. Um...not necessarily like one on ones, but um...people that were
there to consistently like remind kids of what their behavior should be...like kids that are not
capable of regulating themselves and regulating their own behavior, I think that it would be
helpful to have just somebody there when it’s needed...like when they need help regulating...just be able to call and have somebody work with them on regulating their behavior or their mood...even just when it is needed, would be helpful for a lot of my kids. Um...I think that there’s also like a level of...or needs to be a level of like openness with all kids and um...like the discussion of equity and what like every kid needs different things...and having that open discussion is really needed because I’ve had the issue of like, well this kid is the worst behaved in class, like why is he getting rewards all the time. So that was like a big issue...so just like being very open about what kids need and it’s not a secret and it’s like really open and so everyone is on the same page...like students and adults. Um...but yeah, I think just having a person who can come and that knows this kid that they are working with and can really just work with them on problem solving skills and like regulating skills on a regular basis would be like really helpful for a lot of my kids. So that they can...like a gradual release...so they can work on like doing that themselves eventually. Those are the two things I think of the most.

Ok. Tell me a little more about um...you said, students who sometimes have the most challenging behavior apparently are then rewarded often. Can you tell me a little bit more about that? What do you mean by that? And why is that challenging or can maybe be a conflict?

Yeah...so, totally. So, like, a normal...like what I would consider an average student...like, they know that they need to sit on the carpet, they know they need to like, keep their hands to themselves...they know these basic school norms. Where, some of my other kids don’t...or just aren’t able to control their bodies...so they will get rewarded for like you were here for five minutes and you didn’t hit anybody...or, you um...didn’t um...you know...physically hurt anybody for the past ten minutes...or....like...they’re...I’m praising them for a lot smaller things because that’s what they can handle themselves...where other kids in my class, it’s like, no, you are expected to sit on the carpet for fifteen minutes and not move...or not get off the carpet...and so, I guess, we are like rewarding kids based on what they can handle themselves, or what we think they can handle is more accurate. Um...and so, some kids just need constant praise and like constant rewarding of these behaviors so they can more...more...like more successful. And that doesn’t make sense to kids...they are like, well I was good for fifteen minutes and I haven’t gotten anything. They’ve been sitting for three and they got a piece of candy or they got a star...and so...yeah...that’s the issue that I see in my class, that there’s a level of...it doesn’t seem fair to a lot of kids.

Ok. Does it seem effective for those kids that need the constant praise or smaller chunks of reward and reinforcement?

Um...some...it’s not consistent. But, when it helps, it helps. And when it doesn’t, it doesn’t. And so, I would say it helps more often than not. Um...I use like a star chart rewards system, and so sometimes it’s like I see them, and I write like a nonverbal star just to kind of remind them, you are doing great and I see you...um...and then like when they reach ten stars they get like to choose from like their list of rewards...and some are small, like ten minutes of computer time,
and some are bigger. So it helps them sometimes, but sometimes it’s like, I don’t care about that chart and I am going to do what I am going to do...so it’s not consistent.

So, what’s your take on the impact on student behavior on other students? You talked a bit about the impact of the rewards system on other students, but what about the impact of certain kids’ behavior on other students? Whether it is student behavior that is just kind of, dangerous in general, or behavior that is more aggressive toward other students. What do you see is the impact on other kids, and how do you respond to that...or not even respond to it, but what’s your thought about that?

It’s something I have thought about a lot actually, because I have um...some kids where their behavior...like it affects me on a daily basis...so I can only imagine what it does to students who have been with this kid for three years. So I think, it bothers me a lot how much they are affected by it. But, I think that they’ve grown so used to ignoring it...it’s like shocking to me all the time, when, I have one kid screaming at the top of his lungs, and it doesn’t seem to phase anybody in class. It just blows my mind that they seemingly can ignore this behavior. But, it’s concerning that they are going to grow up learning to ignore behavior like that, and just learn to accept it...and I, personally, just would not want them to do that. Like, I don’t think you should just accept behavior like this. So, I’ve talked to some people about it, and some...when...when bigger things happen, like not just when he is screaming...but there are times when the kids have all seen him hit me...and that just...we have pretty lengthy conversations about it...where like, I let them ask me questions about it...and I let them know, this behavior is not okay....not only to teachers, but to each other, to anybody. It’s never ok to hit anybody...that kind of a thing. But I can see that a lot of kids are pretty checked out...like...just like they ignore the behavior, the ignore the talks about it, I’ve noticed. And so, I don’t know if that’s just from...this is their third year of seeing it, or...I’m not sure what it is. But, it’s something that’s really bothered me.

What about behavior between kids that maybe not be by a student that has tier three behaviors...but maybe, like, there was a fight on the playground...or a disagreement, or two kids get in a conflict...not necessarily a student that has very specific needs, but more just kind of general student behavior and discipline that might pop up. Like, let’s say, two kids go out on the playground and a fight pops up, and they come back into your classroom...what to you is important to address, resolve...back in the classroom after something like that has happened?

Um...I think it is really important to like address it and resolve it period...because...I see a lot of teachers....not necessarily just teachers...but I see a lot of brushing it off, like, oh, they’ll get over it and I just have to teach kind of thing...and I totally get that. But I also think that um...it’s important for the kids to work to resolve it...not necessarily themselves, but I think...just so they aren’t just like holding this anger in and then the next recess they are just going to go out and fight again. Um...but I don’t know how much that...I haven’t thought a lot about that kind of behavior affecting the other kids really...and even though it obviously does...but I haven’t thought about it as much. But, I think it’s important that if there is any student conflict, for it to
be resolved thoroughly, not just like forcing them to apologize to each other. I think they need to like talk about what happened...depending on the kids and what happened.

You said some people might respond in a way of just, I just need to get to teaching, so I am not going to respond to this. Tell me more about that. What do you see is that kind of response? Why would someone have that response? You said you might understand why they would.

Well I think that’s what you have to do if you have like twenty other kids that are ready to do what you are doing, and there’s two kids that are upset, I think that um...that’s when a support would be really nice...like somebody that can come in and help resolve this conflict while you are teaching....because, realistically, if they are that angry, they are not going to be learning anyways...so there is no point in them sitting through a lesson and pretending they are listening when they are just thinking about what just happened. But I think that as a teacher, realistically you can’t just stop everything and resolve this conflict cause it happens every day...and you know...you would never teach anything. So I think that’s where like a support would...is needed...and would come in and help.

Alright, thank you. That is all of my questions unless you have anything else.

I don’t think so.

Ok. Thank you!

Teacher 3 [Pseudo Name Shelly]; Female; 40 years; 17 years teaching
12/19/17; 11:30 am; Interviewed by Kaitlyn Spore
Currently teaching 1st grade

KS: Ok, to start, can you state your name and acknowledge that you are being recorded.

3: My name is [Shelly] and I acknowledge that I am being recorded.

Ok, so the first one is, when a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? And do you think your response is effective? And how do you know that?

Um...I would say it depends on what the behavior is...um...if it’s a minor behavior, I try to correct it and give positive feedback to those kids who are doing the correct thing and see if that will impact the student and have them think about it and fix it. Um...if not, I might go and say, hey, can you please keep your hands to yourself? Or, you need to sit this way, or you need to sit this way. Uh, I try to keep a, an upbeat, positive tone in my voice all the time. Um...and sometimes it’s effective...I think it just depends on the child cause some children [laughs] are much harder to be effective with. Um...and then I usually can get the child to correct their behavior so...it’s successful most times.
What about non-minor issues?

Uh, major issues, especially if another child is in danger or if there is a safety thing, I will step in immediately and stop what I am doing and probably use a...a louder voice to make an impact of like...this is important, you need to fix it now...um kind of mentality, but always still like with a smile on my face. Where I might be loud and I might be firm, but I still have a smile on my face of like ok, now! You know, kind of thing. So...I think behavior wise, I am pretty effective for most students...I feel that I can control a lot of situations without like...things escalating so...

Do you think that your kind of response to misbehavior has changed over the course of your teaching career?

Um...yes and no. I think with years experience I’ve learned a lot of different strategies to use...um...from when I first started teaching, my first year. I taught older kids, in 5th grade, and their behavior was...I was just shocked...I didn’t even know what to do. [Laughs]. Um...so, I definitely have learned a lot over the years. Kids, unfortunately, behavior has gotten a lot worse over the years. Um...even though I am going down grade levels, um...it, it has definitely changed. I taught in Hawaii for three years, and that was a whole different type of atmosphere as well. Um...two of those years being on a military base, so...parents were expecting very like...rigid um...strict behavior. Um...so, it has definitely changed, through I think just trainings, just through knowledge of kids, knowledge of cultures...like, I think it’s changed a lot over the years. And being more effective in less time, and less draining.

What do you believe is the purpose of disciplining a student? And also, how would you define discipline?

Um...I think the purpose of disciplining the child is to help them be successful and just do the right thing in the classroom. Um...I don’t know...I don’t do a lot of actual discipline, like, oh you’re in trouble, you’re in time out. It’s more of corrective behavior. Um...to get them on the right track to be successful. Um...obviously there are times for discipline...if another student is hurt. Um...even with like straight up defiance, I’m not like oh, you need to lose your recess. It’s like no...we need to have a conversation about how we are going to fix this so I feel respected and you feel respected. Um...cause them losing recess or them like sitting and like out of something, isn’t going to fix their behavior. I think the conversation is...you might have that conversation during recess...[chuckles]...but it is...but the point isn’t for them to lose their recess, it is for them to get on the right track of making good choices and being successful. I think the whole goal, as a teacher, is that you want your kids to be successful. If they can’t behave correctly and they impact those students around them, and they impact you as a teacher being able to do your job....then you need to step in to fix that...whether it be conversation, or whether it be, let’s come up with a plan, of like, hey...this isn’t working. Like, you obviously have a problem...either with the assignment, is it too hard? Do I need to modify it? Is it too easy? Do I need to challenge you? Is it, you don’t have a clue what you are doing and we need to get you some more help? Um...kind of behavior...I mean, usually the root of behavior isn’t because they
just want to do it. There’s usually an underlying reason. Not all cases...[laughs]...I have since
found out. But, um...I think generally...I, I don’t know if I would call it discipline necessarily,
but I use a lot of...I try to avoid sending kids to the office at all means, because when they are out
of the classroom, they are missing education. So...

You said you would have a conversation with students. What would that conversation consist of,
or what would the framework of that conversation be?

Um, I think that trying to get to the issue more...like, hey, why are you doing this? Did you wake
up and have a bad day? Um...it’s funny because the mood meter has actually come into play a
lot...of like kids saying, I’m grumpy. My mom woke me up early and I just wanted to sleep. Or
like, I stayed up really late and had to get up early. And it’s like, hmm, maybe that’s why you’re
in a bad mood today. Um...so, just kind of talking about like...ok, tomorrow, how could we fix
this? Like, maybe you can go to bed earlier, and you can say, Mom, can you wake me up in a
different way, and not yell at me, can you just like come and tap me? Or like, let’s learn to raise
our hand. If it’s too hard, don’t just sit there and get mad. If you raise your hand, I might not be
able to come to you right away, be patient...let’s see if we can figure it out. The more kind of
coming up with plans with how to fix it. If it’s a kid who’s hitting all the time, if it’s a kid who’s
swearing all the time...then the conversation is a little bit different. It’s more like, this is
unacceptable. I can’t have you be unsafe to yourself, unsafe to me, unsafe to your classmates. It
isn’t more of like, oh, how are you today? No. It’s more like, in my classroom it’s not allowed.
So it’s more of a, not an easy going conversation. Where as...and that is very rare I would say.
In my seventeen years, I’ve had a couple of years where there’s one child that will do that. But
um...generally speaking, I think that um...you can earn their respect and they appreciate or...if
you earn their respect, they’re going to behave for you. And nine times out of ten, they do...in
my experience.

What about, it sounds like a lot of what you are describing are behaviors in the classroom, or
directed toward the teacher. What about student to student conflicts? How do you handle that?

I’ve actually been really lucky...um...when I taught in older grades, it was a little more of the...he
said, she said, I don’t like them, the gossipy kind of turning one kid against another kid.
Um...that was the beginning of my career, the older kids. And um...it was more challenging
because there was um...more people involved. It wasn’t a one on one or two on one situation. In
primary grades, in like my K-1 experience, it hasn’t happened too often at all, where I’ve had to
deal with it. It’s a quick like, hey, we are all friends...we are all friends in Kindergarten, we are
all friends in 1st grade. Let’s figure out how we can get along. And it’s kind of like solved the
issue, it hasn’t...it hasn’t been a repetitive thing where it lasts more than like five
minutes...[chuckles]...it’s more of like oh I am young and I am mad that he didn’t share the toy
type of thing, and then it’s over. Um...so, in the older grades, I would try to like, ok, let me hear
both sides of the story, see what the problem was, see if I could solve it. If it was just like an
attitude thing, like, she said this, he said this. Then I was like, ok, you know, we need to like get
over it, figure it out, and move on....cause what is the point of this. And...I mean that was a long
time ago to be honest. But, um...I don’t feel like there was ever anything that was detrimental that lasted for like more than a day. So um...yeah, I would say if you talked to any principal that I’ve worked under, there would be very few instances where I’ve had to deal with them, unless it was a major behavior. I really try to solve all the problems in the classroom, and get it figured out. And if I have to go to the resort of calling the parents and saying, hey, I’m noticing this. Did something change at home? Is there something I should know? And sometimes there is major things that happen at home that kinda give a little bit more validity to, oh, this is why they are acting out, or like...kind of stuff like that, but...generally, I feel like my classrooms have been pretty, behaviorally wise, ok. So...

You mentioned, if you earn students’ respect, then often they will behave. How do you go about earning their respect? Or what does that look like?

Um...I think making a connection with them, I think getting to know them on a different level then just teacher mode. I’ve always been a firm believer of making that connection. I’ve worked with teachers that wouldn’t tell their students anything about them. They wouldn’t tell them like their first name...they wouldn’t tell them anything. Um...I’ve always found it to be, I don’t know, very worth it, to share my life with them. I mean, not every detail, but I tell them about my dog, I tell them about my kids. I write stories about them. And they are all asking me...even parents will say, oh, I heard [daughter’s name] you know, got a soccer game this weekend. And I am like, oh, I am sure they are sick of hearing about...and they are like, no, they love telling me all about it. So it’s just like a different connection. It isn’t like oh, I’m your best friend kind of thing. But it’s like, I care about you, and I want you to be successful, so I am going to get to know more about you, not your school necessarily. And I want you to know about me. I want you to know where I am coming from...um...just even um, when my grandma was sick. I would tell them about it, and the kids would come up and like give me hugs, ya know? Then, I think, they like truly care. But I feel like that relationship with them and just even at [school name] alone, I walk down the walkway, and like twenty kids alone with say, Oh, hi Ms. [Last Name], hi Ms. [Last Name], and I’m getting like hugs left and right. So I feel like, I’ve done a good job of like making that relationship outside of the classroom. When you have like kids coming back all the time...can I help you? Can I help you? Oh hi! Can I give you a hug? Like, you know. That tells me that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. So...

Ok. What do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline? And what do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?

Um...well, if a teacher does their role correctly, the administrator should not have to be there. I think administrator comes into play on those major, safety behaviors. And um...their job is to keep each child safe...so, if one child is disrupting that, then they need to either remove that child and figure it out, or work on a plan with a higher level...um...which has definitely been a case in multiple situations for me...[chuckles]. Um, I think that a teacher’s job in terms of behavior and discipline is set up expectations that prevent behaviors from happening. Um...if you know your class...and that changes year to year what that’s going to look like for sure...just based on what
the kids need and how they react...but, I think that if you are aware of what your students need, and you are persistent, and you keep with your plan, then um...hopefully those behaviors will be very limited and the discipline will not need to happen. I mean, of course, you will always have those kids that will push the boundaries, that will always be like, oh I don’t care what you say, I am just going to do whatever I want to do. Um...and I’ve definitely had my fair share of those...but, 99% of the class wants to be successful. They want to...especially younger grades. They may not be able to academically handle it, but they want to make you happy...is what I’ve found. It might be really hard, and they might get frustrated, but that isn’t necessarily a discipline, it’s more of a reaction than a discipline. Or a behavioral issue. So, as a teacher, getting to know that about your kid and trying to change that is the role. I feel like, as a teacher, if you can figure out what your kids need and change things, and it’s not going to be the same for each kid, because different kids need different things...um...hopefully your discipline and behavior issues will go away.

What about those few kids? You said, 99% of the kids like want to do what’s right and follow the expectations. How do you work with that 1% of kids that are maybe like defiant, or don’t follow...?

Well, this year I definitely have one of those. Not even [student name], but just... and I feel like I am really working on just having like conversations with him that have like nothing to do with school. Like, oh, did you get a haircut? I love your haircut. Oh, what did you do this weekend? And he was talking about puppies, and I was like...oh, I am so jealous you get to go see these puppies. You know. And just making that connection. And I notice on the days that I have those outside conversations with him, that have nothing to do with school, nothing about his behavior.... he’s much more likely to be successful. Talking to his mom, she’s like...he freaks out if I look in his backpack, so I don’t. Honey, you’re his mom. You can do it. You have the right to look in his backpack. No matter how much he freaks out...[chuckles]...you know. And just like, reassuring her that...don’t let him take control of you. He’s 7, or 6. And you’re an adult, kind of. You know. And I’ve noticed...I’ve worked really hard this last month of just trying to like talk him up as much as I can. Oh, Ms. [Last Name], I did my homework. Oh, Ms. [Last Name], can I be your helper? You know, just getting them to do things that make them feel special. Not a reward necessarily, but make them feel wanted cause somethings happening where they are not feeling wanted somewhere else. And it’s helped. It doesn’t work everyday....and it doesn’t necessarily work when they are outside my classroom. But, in my classroom, it’s been successful.

You mentioned admin’s job is to keep kids safe and to take it to a higher level if needed. Can you tell me more what that looks like or what you mean?

Um...in situations where kids are out of control and not safe...um...it is admin or...coming up with a plan or... in [student name] instance, having that one on one support, or having another...if it isn’t a one on one...having another body checking in and able to reach. And if the administrator is not there...which is often happening...having someone that either, can come
watch my class so I can handle the situation outside the classroom, or coming to help remove
that child. Um...I have noticed a lot this year, my kids were actually....feeling very unsafe in my
room. They would flinch...they would be like ahhh...anytime...like, it was very uncertain of what
was going to happen. And um...I think I just kept pushing and pushing and pushing....this isn’t
what’s best for this classroom, it isn’t....it needs to change. So um...they came up with a lot of
different ways to protect the kids....and have them feel safe. Getting him out of the classroom
within two minutes, all the...like every time there was a behavior. But just, really, being
supportive of teachers and believing...I think an important thing they can do is...unless they are
in the classroom, take the teacher’s word for the behavior. No teacher is just making up a
behavior to get a kid out of their classroom...I don’t think. That’s my personal thing. Like, if I
go to an administrator, it means it’s a real problem, and I need help. Um...and their job should
be to do as much, or anything that they can, to...help that situation, which is going to look
different in a lot of things...and um, but I think that...supporting the teacher with the behavior or
discipline, is a key. Working together is going to be a key ingredient for success.

What are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student
discipline? Why or why not?

Umm...I am on the fence about suspension. Um.. I, again, think that the kids need to be at school
and learning. However, in some situation, it isn’t safe for anyone involved. Now, I don’t agree
with sitting in the office and playing all day as a discipline. That is not my idea of discipline. If,
the kid can be at school and actually be an effective student, and try to do something, or be
expected to do something....that would be a different situation. I don’t think that out of school
suspension...oh just stay home...is beneficial to anyone. Um...a student is like, yeah, I get to stay
home. The parent is like, crap, my kid’s home, what am I going to do with them? Do I need to
take a day off work? And the teacher is like, oh are they just sitting and playing in the office, or
are they at home and no one is paying attention to them, and then they’re just getting into more
trouble. So I think the at home suspension is a...or out of school suspension...is not a win for
anyone involved. Um...if it is in school suspension...um...and I am firm believer of some kids do
not allow to belong back in the classroom that day, or the next day, depending on what the
behavior was...um...I think if a child, for instance...I don’t know if [teacher name] brought this
up, but when a child punches you or hits you in the gut, intentionally, as a teacher...I would not
want that child back in my room in the next half hour pretending that nothing happened. They
have some real thinking to do of like, why on earth would you think it’s ok to do that to me?
Because I know I would never think it’s ok to do that to you. Um...and for a 7 or 8 year old to
even...there’s some deeper issues going on if that’s happening. So, figuring out what that is,
talking with the parents, coming up with again with some situations of how is this student going
to learn to behave correctly in the classroom...what can I do to help that kid get there, and for
everyone’s sanity, maybe some space is the right thing to do. But not just space in like, go play
in the office. Cause that, as a teacher, is the most frustrating thing to me, because it’s like, this
kid just destroyed my entire room, with no...now he gets to go play on the ipad. [Laughs].
Which is really frustrating as a teacher....so....I think there’s a place for in house suspension if
it’s run effectively.
Tell me what that looks like, like in your own view, of an effective in school suspension.

I would think that the student would be doing work that they were missing in class. Umm...to the best of their abilities...like, having someone check in on them...and like, and you know, this is like 1st, 2nd, Kindergarten stuff, so it’s not like...I wouldn’t be giving something that they have like no clue...but they should be reading, they should be practicing writing, whether it’s writing an apology note, whether it’s uhhh...writing a note to the class...I’m sorry you felt unsafe and for making a bad decision...or to the teacher of like, I shouldn’t do that...next time I will do this. Or, can you help me so I can figure out what to do if I get this frustrated in the future? Um...you know as a teacher I would be happy to check in on my planning and be like, hey...this is what we are doing...do you understand how to do this? And I know a lot of the time the students that have behaviors are lower academically, but I don’t think that you just...to make it like easy...here’s an ipad, play on it. Um, there are reading things you can, there’s lexia. There are things that you can do, but I would...I would make them realize that this isn’t like a fun thing. Oh, I messed up. And again, during that time, of like having the conversation of like, getting down...maybe the principal is talking to them, maybe the counselor is talking to them. What’s going on? Like, why did we do this? I think it has to be a pretty major offense for them to have this happen in the first place, so kinda digging deeper with that child, either the administrator or the counselor...of what was behind it or why it might have happened?

What are some of those...describe what are some of those behaviors or major offenses, in which you think a student should be removed from the classroom.

Um...I think destroying...destruction of property...not just of like one thing... but of like, absolutely destroying...like turning over a bookshelf and throwing things. Um...ripping things off the way, like in a big like explosion, I would say. I would say, if a student is um...punches another child...um...in order for that child to feel safe, they need to be removed from the classroom. I would say probably for the rest of the day, not liking going on into the next day. Umm...I think at times verbal...um...and again, it depends on the child and the situation and what the plan is for them, but if it was a regular ed, standard Jo Shmoe, and so if they start swearing up a storm and start calling teacher and kids names, they need to be removed. Um...I don’t feel like even like a stealing thing or like...little minor things like oh, I pushed a kid...and knocked a kid over...none of that kind of stuff, but like major blow ups, destroying room, vulgar, disgusting language toward teacher or students, or the physical harm of another student.

And what in your mind, you said, once they are removed for a period of the day or the rest of the day, what about the process of coming back into the classroom? How would that look ideally?

Um...if it was just teacher related...like, if it just impacted the teacher...I would say before that they would...before that they would be allowed back in the classroom that there would be a conversation with the student, the administrator, and the teacher...saying here’s the plan, what are we going to do next time? How are you going to fix what you did? Whether you destroyed
property or you said vulgar, disgusting things...whatever it is...um...how is that...how are you
going to make everyone feel safe? How are you going to be respectful to the teacher and the
class? Umm...starting now before you enter...what’s going to happen now if you can’t keep your
promise next time...like what is the consequence going to be next time? And then if a student is
involved, I think it’s really important that the other student and the administrator and the...and
the behavior student...meet to make sure that they feel safe and how they are going to respond
to...in the classroom...like no retaliation...like no like bad mouthing, just like...just to make sure
everyone is on the same page and we are starting fresh. I paid my consequence, I’m not going to
do it again...mentality. In an ideal world, that’s what would happen.

Alright. What are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think efforts at reducing
suspending within your district or school have been effective?

Um...I think there’s a limit like...if kids...for out of school suspensions, I am all for limiting
them. Like...do your best, if you have the resources, to have in house suspensions. I don’t feel
like kids...I don’t feel like you should not suspend kids if it is an act that deserves it. Now, if it’s
like, three swear words...they swore three different times, you are going to be suspended. Eh, I
don’t know about that. If it’s a major offense, I feel that they deserve to be suspended. You
can’t just be like, ohh, we are really trying to cut out suspensions, so...uhh...ok, we’ll just give
you another warning or whatever. But if it’s like minor things that accumulate to if you get so
many write ups you get suspended, I’m not down with that. But if it’s major offenses, I feel like,
if there’s a need to be suspended, then it should happen, regardless of your desire to cut or limit
the number of suspension as a district or as a school or whatever. Um...I feel like this year,
[principal] has done a much better job of being respectful of that. If kids need to be out of the
classroom, and get a suspension, I feel like she is actually doing a much better job than I have
seen in years past. Which, there are times where kids do not belong back in the classroom after
their behavior. Um...and I think...I think the district...well, the high school at least...I’ve heard
lots of stories where kids are getting away with things that they should not...only because they’re
trying to limit the number of suspensions. So, I don’t agree with that.

And, when you are saying, the major suspensions, you mean the same kind of major offenses you
described earlier?

Yeah. Like destroying a classroom, punching, like very aggressive behavior toward a student or
a staff member.

What about previous years? When the district first started wanting to reduce suspensions, how
did that look within your school?

Umm...well, it would be the room destroyed and within ten minutes to an hour, the kid’s back in
my class to destroy it all over again. Oh, they’re young, it’s ok...Umm...that kind of thing. I
think kids would owe a recess or two recesses, and then go back in the classroom, and it would
happen again. So, it was kind of like a never ending cycle of, yeah, this kid is losing a lot of
recesses, but the behavior isn’t changing. So, I think...parents...parents are to blame...well, not to blame...parents need to be involved in that as well. I think if parents aren’t aware...if parents aren’t included...and some parents don’t want to be or don’t want to hear it. But I think that the more the parents are included in it, um...the more impact it has on them...then they are more likely to help fix the behavior.

*Um...Ok. Tell me what you know about restorative justice.*

Um...I don’t know a ton. I know that we’ve been reading books through the last year or two, trying to get on the same page...talking about...just how the brain works, how it gets...mentally how you have to approach different situations...getting to know um...just how things work and taking just the way you talk to kids...everything...to a different level. Um...to change, not their frame of mind, but just the approach that you’re taking. Umm...I haven’t done a lot of research or anything on it, so just based on a few meetings and reading parts of a book. [Laughs]. I mean, I don’t know a ton about it.

*What have you learned from...how would you describe it from what you’ve read, or heard in meetings, or what would you associate it with based on what you’ve heard or what you’ve seen?*

Mmm...[pauses]. I don’t know. Um...I don’t know how to explain it.

*Just if someone off the street was like oh, tell me what restorative justice is. What would you say based on what little knowledge that you have or have been exposed to?*

I don’t know...I don’t really know a whole lot.

*But it’s something that you’ve heard?*

It’s definitely something that has been pushed a lot in the last few years...a new approach, a new way of handling so called discipline or not discipline. I think a lot of it is having to know about the culture or having to know about um...how things physically work and how to change the way...the way...you approach a situation in order to have different results. Um...I don’t know.

*Just from what you’ve heard, or read, or know about so far...what are your initial thoughts and feelings about what restorative justice is, or it being at a school?*

Umm...I think if you can get the buy in, if you can get teachers knowledgeable about it, I think it could be very successful. Um...and I think if you can get everyone on board, including families, I think it’s like a full circle thing, I don’t think it’s like an oh...the principal can tell me to do this, and then I might do it some of the time. I think with any new approach, it has to be...I think, teachers have to have the background knowledge and the impact or the results that it could have...and then be consistent with it. Um...I feel that if you just have some staff members doing it half heartedly, I don’t know if it would be successful. I think it has to be something that
people believe in and carry through with...umm...year after year. It can’t be like an, oh let’s try this on for a year and see how this works, and then be done. Because I think, unfortunately, a lot of the things that we do in the school system are a hit and miss...and you try it for a few months and then you forget about it. And then you do something else, and then you do something else and then you do something else. Umm...but I think this is like an approach that in reality could potentially have a big change for students and how they feel in the classroom, and hopefully it would impact their behaviors and reduce that...and them feeling like they have a say. If you know them and you know where they come from...that...um...there’s reasoning behind things.

You mentioned it would require everyone to be on board. What would that take for everyone to be on board?

I think it would take everyone having the knowledge of what it is and what it entails and the willingness to...to implement...or to have that frame of mind. I think...I feel like restorative justice is more than just implementing, it’s a frame of mind and being able to do it without thinking about it...it just naturally comes to you...and I think that um...if teachers are not supportive of it or don’t believe that that’s what it should be, and they don’t do it, I think that it’s detrimental to the whole...to the school as a whole...because it’s something that I feel it’s where everyone needs to be involved. It can’t just be a few here and there for it to be successful. Because those kids interact, even if you’re not their classroom teacher...they interact with you or with kids in their class. And if they aren’t feeling a certain way or things are handled differently...um...I don’t know, I just feel like it needs to be an all in kind of practice.

You mentioned frame of mind, like someone might have a different frame of mind. What would someone maybe with a different frame of mind, say about restorative justice?

Well...I feel like some teachers are just like more of a disciplinarian...like, oh you did this, you have to do this. This is what happens...I don’t care where you are from, I don’t care how old you are...I don’t care...like, you do the crime, you do the punishment...you know, kind of mentality. But with restorative justice, that doesn’t fly. I mean, that isn’t...So I feel like, depending on who the staff members are and depending on their ability to...if they don’t have that frame of mind, if they are not...uh...yeah. I just think you have to have people who are all willing to be open minded about it. Um...I don’t know. I feel like there are people in the world that are just very old school, and don’t change. So, um...help them see the benefits of it and why it would be important to try it. Um...

Um...if you were to try restorative justice, either in your classroom or your school, what support would you need?

Um...I think I would need...well, I would need a lot more background knowledge...but not just um read a book on it. Like, I need person to person like interaction on it...show me what it looks like. Um...whether it be through video or whether it be like, oh try it on, this is what this would look like in this situation...um...I think I would need time to explore it, time to just try it
on...um...before I could go like full heartedly into it. But I think mainly it would be, instead of just shoving a book at me, that’s not the type of learner I am, so I need um...I need...I need to see it in action to see what it looks like before I could really fully...And I don’t think we have necessarily done that very much.

Ok. What do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, for restorative justice responses to be effective?

Um...I think communication across the board, like between families, between employees, between administrators...um...between kids...um...I think everyone needs to be aware of what it looks like and what the expectations are. Um...and how it could feel different in hopes that the goal is obviously to reduce that discipline and have people feeling like they want to be there and feel important. And um...I just think getting everyone...just the communication...of the kids knowing, the parents knowing...the teachers knowing...um...and continually ongoing...um...seeing like what’s working, what isn’t. You know, ongoing training, for teachers if they need it. Um...kids...um...kids also respecting it...like, if I’m going to respect this approach, like, be open minded about, yeah, it’s going to look different, but your behaviors need to change as well. Um...and maybe how you handle different things, um...I think communication is like...with everyone...you know I say over and over again, on the same page, but...so everyone’s aware about it.

What um...What’s the downside if everyone is not on the same page or not being consistent in their practices?

Um...well, the kids will get different glimpses of different things, and if it’s not...I don’t know, if you’re running a business and two people aren’t doing it correctly, it’s just a detriment to overall, where there’s holes, people are slipping through, things are happening. And I feel like, if too many people are not following through or not taking on the approach, then kids see that, oh, it’s not that serious...some of them are doing it, some of them are not. It’s not really going to last long, so I don’t really care...kind of mentality. So, I don’t know. Anything is better with a strong background. I would say that the more support you have, the stronger it is to...hopefully it will be impactful to a bigger level without...um...without kids slipping through the cracks.

If your administrator was about to implement this, or going to implement it, what questions would you have, or what would you say to them, or what would you want them to know?

Uh...what is my role in it? Uh...show me more. Um...just so I know the ins and outs of it more and what is expected on my end. Um...and how, like how are they going to follow through? How are we going to check on it? Uh, is it working? Is it beneficial? Are kids reacting to it? Um...or is it...or are we in the same exact boat, where discipline is...is higher...or just the same situation. Like, is it being impactful at a school level. You know, just like watching the data, keeping the data, is it helpful? How do kids feel? I would say doing surveys. How are the kids
attitudes toward it? How are the staff’s attitudes toward it? I don’t think it is just something you can turn on and say, ok go. It’s going to take time to be impactful at a school.

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your beliefs, your thoughts, your opinions, regarding student behavior, discipline, suspensions, or restorative justice that you would like to share or think would be helpful for this study?

I think...the only thing I would say is I think...I think the teachers...I think building that relationship with families...it is critical. Um...I think the behaviors just keep getting worse, and worse, and worse as I keep teaching, and it’s a problem...and it’s like shocking...and I am really worried like, if my child became a teacher, like I worry for her safety and what her classroom would look like. Um...so I would encourage that teachers get to know those families...like have those connections...so they have your back when their kid is having trouble, and can help you with like, oh, this is what’s happening at home, do you notice this at school? Like, having just that team work is...hopeful...and that’s what I like strive to do...try to make those connections. Um...I wish teachers could have more time to make those connections...not a connection academically...I’m talking like on a personal level, like oh, how is your family doing? What do your kids like to do? What do you like to do? What’s stressful to you at home? Just, really getting to know those things. Because being a parent is tough, it’s stressful, and if the teacher can help at school...you know, I tell my kids all the time, like hey...did you tell your mom like thank you for getting me to school on time today? Like, are you being respectful and appreciative of all that they’re doing for you? Well, try it. You know. So, I just think that having that connection, both with the child and with the family...non academic connection...um...it’s kind of key to behaviors. And I don’t know if that’s kind of why I haven’t had many behaviors...um...major. And some of those major kids are just...they are what they are...no getting to know the family is going to make that better necessarily...so. Um...yeah. Having connections are huge.

Ok, if you were in charge of a school, or designing your ideal response to student behavior...response, or you talked a lot about the preventative side too...what would you say would the key factors you would consider or want in place?

Um...if I was running a school...communication, social interaction...um...manners, um...team building, both as a staff and a student level...um...consistency, knowledge of students and families. I guess for communication I would say open line of communication...like ongoing communication. Mmm...yeah, a plan. Yeah, you have to have a plan...it could be individualized based on students...but have somewhat of a plan...consistency and have people on the same page.

Can you tell me more about the team building aspect? You said team building among staff and among students....tell me more about what that would look like.

Umm...I would say, just like, different activities...just like trying to get staff to realize just how critical every little piece of the puzzle is...um, I think in the classroom you need to do that
too...like, you’re stronger as one whole unit, and if you’re not all building each other up...if you have one negative nelly, like putting everybody down all the time, or doing things like that...it kind of just ruins like the whole...you’re negative, I don’t really want to produce for you...I think if everyone understands how important the team and everyone working together to be successful...like, you can’t do it by yourself. You need to support, you need the back up...even with the students...you need to all be able to work together without like bashing people, without like...like, oh I see that’s really hard for you, can I help you? Like, with kids...it’s like, oh, I can help you with that, let me talk to you about it. Just like, knowing that people care and are there for you, even if it is really hard, um...I think that’s important. Because if you have people that aren’t...that don’t feel cared for or don’t feel like they are part of the team, then they aren’t going to produce for you. And they aren’t going to be part of the solution.

Teacher 4 [Pseudo Name Cindy]; Female; 54 years; 20 years teaching
12/20/17; 9:30 am; Interviewed by Kaitlyn Spore
Currently teaching 4th grade

KS: Ok, to start, can you state your name and acknowledge that you are being recorded.
4: My name is [Cindy] and I acknowledge that I am being recorded.

Ok, so the first one is, when a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? And do you think your response is effective? And how do you know that?

So...the policy that I’ve adapted over maybe...the last four years...is reminder, warning, you’re out. And I’ll explain you’re out. So if a student misbehaves I remind them of what they are doing and how to make a better choice. If they do it again, in a certain window of time, I say, I already reminded you about that, so now you are on warning for doing that. And then if they do it a third time, I say, you had a reminder, a warning, and now you need to leave the room. However, I’ve been lucky to have a great teaching partner who I plan closely with, so when I say they’re out, it means they are just going to my partner’s room, to see the exact same lesson that’s going on in my room, but they’ve been asked to leave. So, my kids know it. The kids...the kids in the other room know it. If that child walks in the other room, it’s like, oh that kid got in trouble. But they still aren’t missing any instruction. That’s sort of mine...that’s what I like about it. As opposed to, wait outside the door. Go to the office. So that’s been my kind of go to. I think it’s effective because I feel like I have pretty good classroom management and I am...I usually have a nice classroom community, and I feel like for 95% of the kids, just getting that reminder, especially if it’s specific, like, Johnny, I’m going to remind you, you blurted out. We raise our hand in this class, or whatever. I think that changes their behavior. I think that I would see Johnny catch himself and try to raise his hand instead of blurt ing out. And, if he does it a second time, because you know everyone makes mistakes, then well, you had a reminder and now you have a warning...you can still mess up twice in a short window. And in fairness, I wouldn’t send a kid out of the room for blurt ing. That was just something that came to my mind.
So, I think it’s effective because I think it changes the behavior. It reminds them of the optimal behavior.

*What would you define as that short window of time?*

Probably one class block, so if it’s reader’s workshop it’s 90 minutes. If it’s math, it’s an hour. I usually see it as...as the instructional block, it’s not all day. It’s like, hey, I reminded you during the mini lesson, and now we are doing partner work...so, like the 60 to 90 minute window.

*You mentioned you have a pretty good classroom community. Can you tell me more about what that means to you, and how you build that or create that?*

Well I have just been blessed, this year and last year, with loving my classes after 18 years of teaching. I am super happy. And...uhh...I guess the way I would describe a good classroom community is kids that feel safe, want to take risks, want to support each other, and kind of are learning the lessons along the way about how to make good choices. That they are open to feedback, that they want to support each other. I’ve had classes on the whole where I feel like the kids didn’t really look out for each other, and that hasn’t been my experience the last two years. I mean, I’ve had many, many good years, but I just think my window right now is these last two classes which have just been phenomenal. So, yeah. A place where they feel safe, happy, willing to take risks...umm...and are open to be willing to learn how to be better people.

*How do you build that?*

Well, this is the first year I’ve taken on, with fidelity, running class meetings. And that’s once a week, and I think this class would have been delightful even without it, but I will say, I think the class meetings have added a lot to that. Um...maybe prior to that, it was just one on one conversations, or conversations with the class where I would call them together and say, hey, there is something I am noticing that’s bothering me, or making me feel bad, let’s discuss it. So, now I just feel like the class meeting format is a little bit more...it’s a more formal, routine, structure the kids can count on to bring any issues forth.

*What brought upon the class meeting this year?*

Um...it’s kind of something that I always wanted to take on, and I know my teaching partner last year did it and had a lot of success with it, and I know another teacher at our school, a 6th grade teacher, does it with success. And I just couldn’t...when I’ve tried it in the past, I’ve just dropped it because I couldn’t...I couldn’t own it enough to make it work for me consistently every week. But I ended up buying a thing on teachers pay teachers that has the four...or for them...the four elements of a classroom meeting...the greeting, the share, the activity, and the goal. And it’s cute and its age...grade appropriate. And it has like 36 different greetings you can use, and 36 fun games. And it’s all neatly laid out...and I bring it home on the weekend and I kind of rifle through it and find what I think my class needs, but I think that because the skeleton is already
provided for me, it’s been easier to take it on. I don’t have to come up with a greeting. I don’t have to come up with a fun game. I don’t have to come up with like a describe your weekend in five words. Like, they are all there. If I want to add my own thing to it, I can. But it’s been a lot easier for me to just go get my class meeting kit. Let me rifle through and find the class goal that I think would be good for my kids. And then so...and then I also put it in my master schedule, uhh...so, it’s just consistent. It’s there. And this class just completely responded beautifully to it, and they look forward to it, and they are great during the time, so...I think it was having the sort of pre made kit that helped me, so I could be like, ok I can handle this. I don’t need to reinvent it every week. And that the kids have really, really enjoyed it. And it’s a fun way to get to know the kids and hear things about them, that, as close as I am to my kids...I eat lunch with them, and they are always in my room at recesses and stuff, I hear things that I think, oh, did not see that coming. You know, uh...what makes a good friend? Or what motivates you to do your best in school? Or what was a time that you dealt with grief? Or something. They share a lot of insightful things that really help me get to know the kids better.

What do you believe is the purpose of disciplining a student, and how would you define discipline?

Purpose of disciplining a student....would be to redirect their behavior into something more conducive to learning, and being a better citizen of the classroom community. Cause I kinda feel like that sort of addresses all kinds of things. Whether they are blurtng out, or swearing or bullying or touching inappropriately...whatever it is, that’s going to get in the way of them being successful student, and a successful member of our classroom, and a successful member of our society...and so, as much as sometimes it used to pain me, not as much now...because I used to think I never signed up to be a counselor when I became a teacher, but my teaching partner of mine many years ago said, you’re wrong. She said that me and I thought, she’s right. That is kinda my job...so, getting them back on track to be successful in the classroom is I guess my definition of disciplining a student...because I guess my ultimate goal is that they’re learning how to do whatever the lesson is, but also at the same time...which I wouldn’t have said this 18 years ago...like, be a good person.

How has um...your definition of discipline, or responding to student misbehavior, changed over the course of your teaching career?

Oh, well, I am sure the first couple of years I am sure my response was...um...that’s annoying, stop. That’s annoying, get out. Go to the office. Like, let the office deal with this problem. And...and I thought that was ok. Like, if you would have asked me that like my first three or four years of teaching, I would have thought, yeah, that’s ok because other kids are ready to learn, and this kid isn’t, and that’s not my problem...and people in the office can deal with it. And now, I think completely different. I’ve made a 180 degree turn. Um...and I also felt like when I started teaching, I really, really believed...I am here to teach reading, and writing, and math, and science, and social studies...and the rest of that stuff, that is for your mom, your preacher, your pastor, your bishop, your grandma, Sunday school...that is not...I did not sign up
to do that. And that was kind of my mantra for the first few years. And even, I felt like I was pretty successful and my kids really liked me, and I had nice classrooms...I did not see that as my responsibility at all, and it really wasn’t until I partnered with [Partner’s Name], and she was like, I don’t know where you got that idea, that is absolutely our job. And I thought ughh....like I hated hearing it, but I thought, she’s right. And I think especially in a low income school, where there might not be as much parent involvement, or...well, you don’t have to be low income to not have good role models, but I think that our kids really struggle there and might not have a lot of the good life lessons that I would hope most kids would have, so I’ve changed significantly over the years. So now I see it more as helping form these like good little human beings that like know how to make good choices and that you have conversations with and that you have to take time out of your day. For example, I always have kids in my room during recess, and part of my reason for that is that for me, that’s a great time to get to know kids, and talk to them, and have intimate conversations that you wouldn’t have during a math lesson...and, I think that’s sort of...I wouldn’t say that’s what’s required of a teacher...but that’s what’s required of me, I guess, to be a good teacher. Like, I guess that’s how I view it. Like, I guess, that is what I signed up for, was to get to know these kids and figure out why are you so off your game today, and what happened to you this weekend, and why are you so worried or frightened...or just tell me something fun and lovely about your day. And that makes them feel...and that just gets them back on that wheel of then they feel safe, and take a risk, and then they can try harder in class, and then they know they have a safe place to fall if they need it, and it just sort of spins into a better world. I guess.

What caused...you said, you’ve made a 180 degree spin since you first started teaching, and you said your former teaching partner, what else caused that change for you? Is there anything else you can think of?

That was my big ah-ha moment. I think. I mean, I still like liked the kids and had fun and I think I was...I had a good classroom community...umm...but I still had that lens of, I am strictly here to teach these subject areas. And I just remember being on the playground once with her and she was telling some kids about like...something about tying their shoe...and I was like, we didn’t sign up for that...I’m not helping that kid with that shoe. That was my pivotal moment. And she was like, yes we did. And I thought, ughhh...that was my turning point I think. (8:57 left)

How did you have to change then, your practices within your classroom? Do you remember, or recall, the shifts you had to make in your practice?

Yeah...it....you know, I would like to think of myself as being somebody that got to know their students, but in honesty, I feel like over the last ten years, it’s probably getting to know the kids in a more meaningful way. And, that takes a ton of time. So even though I was fun and happy and would go out to recess and play with the kids on the jungle gym, that’s not the same as having two kids in to have lunch with you when they’re fighting with each other, or they’re being bullied, or their parents are going through a divorce or whatever. It’s a different level of um...of communication and understanding and it takes more time and it takes uhh...a thoughtful
ear. And some of that stuff is out of my...certainly out of my area of expertise and sometimes my comfort zone...so then, it also involves like me digesting that information, or discussing it with partners, a counselor, or friends...with like the best ways to deal with it. It just takes a lot more time and more thoughtful effort, which is absolutely worth it, but that would be a big shift in practice.

*What do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline, and what do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?*

Well I think I kind of answered that previously with the way that I view my role as a teacher, which is more all-encompassing and involves the whole child as opposed to just the academics. Um...and...so I feel like...for me, I can only speak for myself...and I caution myself, because like I have a student teacher this year, and I’m thinking oh my god, if she heard this, she’d quit, because I feel like it’s so much work. But for me, for me to feel like a successful teacher, I feel...I think the role is being well planned, and doing a good job, teaching good lessons, but also getting to know your class intimately and their needs and their strengths and that sort of thing and...and it can be all consuming, but very rewarding. As far as administration goes, you know, I used to think that the office would just deal with all of the problems that I couldn’t, or just chose not to deal with, and I completely see what a...I mean, that’s absolutely not their job, because it would land on our office manager, who’s lovely, but certainly not her job to deal with a kid who is flipping a table and telling me to fuck off. No, that is not her job. And that’s who it would land on in all my years...in most of my years. So, um...you know, you were lucky if the principal was there to deal with that sort of thing. So when I send kids out now to the office, it’s not really the administrators, it’s the office staff that deals with it. Um...we’ve had some great changes in administration, and I feel supported by our current...I don’t know what she’s called, EA, vice principal...and she came from a school where that was her...that was her only thing, discipline, school discipline. So, I feel very supported by her and I would go to her with any problems that I have, but I don’t...I’ve never had great success in feeling completely backed by any administrator with any one behavior problem.

*What do you think, like ideally, that an administrator’s role should be? It sounds like you shared what your experience has been, but in your ideal world, what would their role be in regards to discipline and behavior?*

Hmm....well isn’t that interesting! Well, I guess over time...like, if you would have asked me that fifteen years ago, I would have said that they handle all of the extreme behaviors that we have in our classroom that are taking away from all of the other kids in the class...the learning of all the other kids in the classroom. But I don’t really think that that’s what they’re role is. But your question was what would it look like ideally. I guess, a place to go...I think of it more as their role on the PBIS team...but I think, a place to go to say this is an issue, or a concern I am having, and not only do I need to talk about it, I need to problem solve, I need support, I need uh...I need follow through. I feel like that’s what’s been lacking from every administrator I’ve worked under, and I’ve probably worked under like ten...is the follow through. I think many
administrators have an open ear, but the...the um...the going in and saying, not only do I need to problem solve, but I need some support here to see me through this crisis, this difficult situation. And I have not had that.

What would follow through look like?

Somebody like...like if I think...like if I am thinking of other examples at our school in the last several years...but, oh, I hear you have a situation, a problem...what’s going on? Let’s try these three things. I’ll check in in x days. Oh, it’s still not getting better? Let’s have a conference with mom. I’ll facilitate. Oh, it’s still not getting better, here’s how I am going to get you support from the school counselor or the outside counseling. Like, never...uh...not just like dropping the ball, but like, coming back with some sort of a...a suggested plan. I just see so many kids, and like I’ve said, it’s been an amazing last couple of years...but just, super high needs kids, and I talk to all those teachers like routinely and I say, what’s going on with you and that student? What’s the office saying? What’s admin saying? And it’s like, oh you know, we need more data until April. And I’m like...well that kid’s been at our school since Kindergarten and he’s in third grade now. How much data could you possibly collect? I feel like it gets pushed...pushed off, pushed back. Like, oh, they’re having a great year this year, so let’s let that ride out. And then it explodes and then it’s like, oh the year’s almost over. Next year it will be different, because he’ll have a different teacher. I see that kind of thing pushed on a lot, where I can think of the teachers and many examples where it’s like, that was an enormous problem all year long and nothing ever really changed. It was all on the teacher’s shoulders. So, support and follow through. Actionable support.

Ok. So, the next question is, what are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student discipline, why or why not?

I don’t think...oh, maybe in my career I’ve had one kid suspended...like in school suspension. And...I guess I don’t...just suspension as a stand alone, I don’t image that it’s terribly effective because either the kid’s suspended and is home for three days, which is probably a dream for most kids, or they’re in the office, doing nothing that’s really going to change the behavior. I think if suspension entails something...involved like...ok, this is significant enough that you should be suspended, then there has to be a conversation after that about, ok, we’ve gotta get a good team in here, like mom, support system, classroom teacher, and come up with, like how is it going to be different once suspension is over. But just suspension as a stand alone, I can’t imagine...I can see how a rare occasion where it’s like, that was all that kid needed to get right back on the...on the right path. But, when I think about older kids, like 6th grade, 8th grade, I can’t imagine that it’s um...successfully going to address the behavior that got them suspended. Which is not to say that I don’t think that there are some things that happen, where I think, I can’t believe that student is allowed to stay in that classroom. I know you interviewed someone who has a...a really significant behavior in their classroom where security has had to come and remove the student, and it takes two adults to like take the kid out of the classroom, and there’s lot of like violence and aggression...and then, you know, an hour later, that kid is right back in
the classroom. And I think well, that’s not ok. I don’t think suspension is the answer, but you can’t just put a kid right back in the classroom without having some sort of a...a plan, a detailed, actionable, thoughtful plan. And I see that way too often. And of course, I’ve only been at our school, but I’ve seen that a lot where...you know...the kid had some calm down time, but then goes right back into the classroom and I don’t think that’s changed a lot of their behavior or addressed the needs of the other kids in the classroom.

Why...um...you said you’ve seen this a lot in your time at [school]. Why do you think that’s the case? Why do you think that’s a pattern, where once an escalated student is removed, they then go back to the classroom very quickly afterwards?

I think...and I hate to be a finger pointer...but I will point the finger at the administration. I feel like I’ve often seen administration, by that I mean the principal...that maybe, just doesn’t know the right thing to do and doesn’t have the...or utilize the resources available to them. Um...I don’t think our counselor at our school is very effective, and so when I think about a kid being physically removed by security, I immediately think, wow, there’s something big going on there. We need a counselor, we need a therapist, we need a psychologist, whatever. Like, this is out of my area of expertise as a classroom teacher, what’s happening here? But, I don’t think we have a very strong team to address that sort of situation. And like, I’ve been on the PBIS team for the past three years, and we never even talk about that kind of thing on PBIS...which is kind of why I went on it in the first place was because I was so frustrated by some of the extreme behaviors we saw at our school, and I thought, well...put your money where your mouth is, and get on that team. And we never talk about it. And so I feel like there’s...I think...it seems overwhelming or out of the principal’s area of expertise, or she doesn’t have a really um...remarkable team to pull on, or doesn’t know how to utilize the district resources to say, we don’t know what we are doing, this is crisis mode, we need some help, get someone in here. And, and I love our school and we are very small and very familiar with each other, and I think so...and often times it often gets put off, you know, like pushed off, by saying, well, Ms. Smith is such a great teacher and she’ll get Johnny in her class and she’ll turn everything around. And it goes right back on the teacher, and then, that just is an extra burden on the teacher. And I feel like, like the administration is not clear on how much that affects all the other kids in the classroom. They see Johnny going back to Ms. Smith’s room, and that’s the end of that story. But, there’s 26 other kids in that classroom who saw that kid do whatever it was that happened. And as many teachers at my school have said, it’s like they’re in...what’s the word...oh, it’s like they are going to school in trauma everyday. They are seeing tables flipped, and biting, and hitting, and hearing profanity and...on a daily basis until the child’s removed. And then the kid comes right back.

And I don’t know, but I know in a couple of cases, where there’s no conversation about why that kid is coming back. So I feel like to answer your question, I think that maybe the administration is overwhelmed and they don’t have enough support systems and you know, I think of somebody like [former principal], whatever people thought of her, she knew where to go...I don’t know if work the system is the right expression, but she knew where all the pots of money were, she knew where the good, you know, where she could get that answer. So I feel like, at least she knew how to use her repertoire of resources, and I feel like...I’ve had several...most principals at
our school have been first year principals, and maybe they just don’t know, and it’s
overwhelming, and they have so much on their plate, and they just...I just don’t know where to
go with that. That the sense at least that I get.

Umm...tell me more about what it would look like to address the needs of the other kids in the
classroom?

Well I think about...like...um...I had a student last year that was pretty high needs, and when he
would be pulled out for services, that’s when I would...we didn’t have class meetings last year,
but we would have an informal class meeting where I would sort of talk about, here’s what we
are seeing, or I know that this is irritating to you, or I’ve heard a student complaints, so let’s talk
about how we can um...be successful in this classroom and with this student and still have a good
year, and not let these things bother us. And um...to be thoughtful enough to know that you have
to deal with the other kids in the classroom who are seeing this repeated behavior, that, you
know...anywhere else would be absolutely unacceptable, whether it’s, you know, I had a kid last
year that would crawl around on the floor and get in the fetal position and cry and yell at me, and
the kids had to just keep right on working through that. And I don’t think that’s normal. So...to
at least have the courtesy to say to the kids, like, this doesn’t look normal, but how can we
best deal with it? And take the time to do that. And I probably wouldn’t have thought to do that
in my first couple of years of teaching, and now I see it as a critical...as a critical piece,
cause...well, this year’s been an easy year for me, but that’s not the norm.

Um... I want to ask you a follow-up question about something you said about joining the PBIS
team. Um...why, so you said you joined because you wanted to be a part of the conversations
about the high needs you were seeing in your school, why don’t you think it’s talked about on
that team, if it is such a high need across the school?

They use the tiers, and it’s like, it’s tier three the top of the pyramid...that’s the, ahhh, kids. So I
routinely hear them saying like...our role, or our number one focus, or our whatever is to deal
with the tier one or two kids...the kids that are blurtling out, the kids that are chewing gum, the
kids that are running on the playground...like getting written up in the cafeteria for throwing a
pea. And it’s like, ok, I get that. We have like our FYI’s, we have our revisit classroom
expectations, lunchroom expectations...I get all that, I get all that...I get that. But like, I already
know how to do that. And I would say that about 85% of the teachers at my school know how to
do that. Oh, let’s review how to behave on the playground, in the lunchroom, in the
bathrooms...but, what I don’t see teachers getting support with, which I think is the most
overwhelmingly, burdensome, difficult, challenging, energy sucking thing, are those high needs
kids. And, it’s always...well, that’s tabled for later...or that’s a tier three, or that involves um...or
if it’s that’s the sort of other, special land where we are going to have to get together with more
people that aren’t a part of this team, and get...and in my mind, I think get the parents involved,
but that’s not what I am hearing PBIS say...but it’s like, oh that’s tier three, that’s not what
we’re...we’re here to make sure kids are safe in the lunchroom and on the playground. And I
don’t disagree with that at all, and I think that’s a great initial...everybody needs that lens for
their school...I just get frustrated that there’s people on that team, you know like... [teacher’s name]...who routinely came in with a grievance, and it wasn’t just her saying poor me, it was poor all of us, because all of us are dealing with this...and it was just completely un...pushed off into the corner. And I thought, why...and would hear oh, this isn’t the venue for that, or this isn’t the time, or right now we need to talk about FYI slips, or right now we need to talk about recess rodeo, or right now we need to talk about tier one or two. And this is...I mean, I’ve been on PBIS before, but this is my second year in a row, and we still don’t talk about those high needs kids, and certainly the rest of our staff doesn’t know, because people will say, what’s going on with Johnny? And I’ve heard more than one support professional, in addition to like teachers....like library and music...say I don’t know, no one’s told me. And I think that that’s really frustrating.

Is there a venue for tier three concerns?

I don’t...you would think I would know, you know, I’m on PBIS...I mean, I think the answer would be...So I mean, like I represent 4th, 5th, and 6th on the team, so if [teacher name] had a significant concern, I would be her rep, she would come to me...she would say I’m having a problem with Johnny, I would say bring it to the PBIS team. We’d sit down...but that’s I think what’s supposed to happen...but I haven’t seen that happen in two years.

Um...what are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think the efforts at reducing suspensions within your district or your school have been effective?

Actually, I don’t think I can really speak to that...because, when I think of reducing suspensions, I think of that as more middle school, high school...and I don’t really know a lot of kids that get in house, or in school suspension, and I don’t hear that as a big concern. Certainly, as I said earlier, I don’t think suspensions are going to help change the behavior, for whatever got the kid suspended....so I’d like to see something in addition or in place of that, but I don’t really have a big stake in that game.

Do you think it has any role in addressing the concerns you mentioned earlier around kids coming right back to the classroom after a major escalation has happened?

I hear that a lot at our school, more from paras, but a few teachers...like, I can’t believe they are letting Johnny back in the classroom after that, he should be suspended. I’ve heard that for years. Um...and I probably would have nodded in agreement at some point...but now, just talking this through with you, and if I’d been pushed on it, I would probably say, well...suspension isn’t really enough. There has to be more to that conversation. Um...so, yeah, if some kid did something outlandish in the classroom and they were removed from the classroom, there has to be some sort of actionable plan that involves the teacher, and the family, and the administration...and what that is...can’t...I don’t think can just singularly be a suspension. Like, oh, you have to stay home for two days and then you can come back. And just miraculously everything will be changed after you spend two days at home.
Alright, tell me what you know about restorative justice.

Virtually nothing. The only thing I know about restorative justice is what I read in Touching Spirit Bear. So based on that absolute nothingness of knowledge, I...I think of it as, something I have sort of alluded to before of...of a network or a group of people that are there to address the problem and you know...try and consider why...what’s going on, what happened, what are the repercussions, what will help them go down a different path? We are all sort of here to handle, understand, deal with the situation. As opposed to an attacking situation, like Johnny did this, so we are kicking him out for two days. It’s like, this is what we are seeing from Johnny, can we have a discussion about it, um...sort of a more open circle of communication that includes the student.

How did you learn about that from Touching Spirit Bear?

Oh, the whole thing is about a kid that gets...beats somebody almost to death in high school...and is either going to face juvenile detention slash jail, or can be part of this restorative circle on an Alaskan island where he has to go for a year. And prior to going to the island, he is with his parole officer, his parents, the kid that he abused, and that kid’s parents, and one of the elders from the tribe in Alaska. And they sit together and they all get an opportunity to say how the event affected them, how they feel about it. Everybody’s voice is heard. Um...and then after that, in the book, the kid goes away, but still has this, what I’ll call a mentor or role model, to help him better understand his anger and what prompted him to do things. You could call it almost a therapist position, although the guy in the book is not a therapist, he’s like a fisherman. But, you know, an opportunity to sort of delve into issues that the student was facing, and learn how to rely on himself and figure out what he thinks is the appropriate consequence for his actions and so forth.

Have you heard the term restorative justice used at all at your school?

Yes.

Tell me more.

We have a principal that’s been there for three years, and...I think if you asked her what her disciplinary beliefs are, she would she believes in restorative justice. Her first year there...she...didn’t want to introduce too many...too many new things to the school, so no one was trained, it was sort of a buzz word we heard. The second year she was there, I joined PBIS, and we continued to hear about it from her, but with no definition. And I think the frustration for our staff was like people would go and say, ok, this is the issue that I am having with Johnny and she’d be like well....we need to deal with that on a case by case basis, because if you knew the Johnny was coming to us from a homeless shelter every day...and, I don’t know if that’s our principal’s definition of restorative justice, but the message it sent to the staff was...everything
needs to be dealt with on a case by case basis and we want to be respectful of the individual student, we can’t put everybody in a box, we don’t want a flow chart or a matrix, that’s not who I am, that’s not who I want us to be. It’s sort of a one on one incident. And I...and I think that was the lens that a lot of us...not the lens, but that’s how it landed on a lot of us. And I wasn’t like, super...well I guess I was, resistant. She never really defined it, so a lot of staff members felt frustrated because it was like, oh it’s different for the kid in Ms. Smith’s class and the kid in Mr. Jones’ class and it’s different for the kid in...you know every kid, every situation is going to be this unique, own situation. But we don’t know what that means or what that looks like...and...and it also seeped across the school because the lunch lady and para educator and the music teacher and the librarian...like they had no idea, and still don’t have any idea, with what’s going on with some of the kids that we’re dealing with on a one on one, restorative basis. And so I think there’s a lot of frustration around that. So then, now in her third year, because I’ve been on the school leadership team for the last couple of years...that came up. And it was sort of an uncomfortable conversation...but we had our school leadership meeting at my house over the summer, and because I sometimes sort of lack a filter when I’m talking, I said, you know, we keep hearing about this, but we don’t know what this is. And people are frustrated, and I am hearing that a lot from people. I’m hearing that a lot from para educators...and so she recommended a book. I could get you a title, but it’s something about the carrot and the stick. And...bought copies for all staff members at the end of last school year I guess...and that was to be a book study we would do...but we’ve never...we all got the book, but we never discussed it, we’ve never had a book group. Does that mean I can’t read it at home on my own and get a better understanding? No. Have I done that? No. You know, if she said, at the staff meeting on Wednesday we are going to discuss chapter 1 and 2 and come prepared...I would be prepared. But, just giving someone a book doesn’t make anything happen. And so I think...I can imagine her being asked, and saying like, what? I bought everyone the carrot and stick book, and they should all have a better understanding of what it is. But, I would be surprised if any of the teachers in my pod that I work with have read it. And not cause...I’m sure it’s good and it’s a small book, but that’s a low priority for me right now.

If you had to guess what the definition of restorative justice, or what it is in a school setting, based on what you’ve been told or what you’ve seen as being defined as restorative justice practices within your building, how would you describe it?

Based on my incredibly limited knowledge...I would imagine that that is a setting in which multiple people are present to discuss relatively severe or critical issues that are happening and possible solutions or steps to take. But I kind of see it as not punitive, but....more of a discussion period where lots of people are present....the counselor, the teacher, the mom, the older sibling, maybe the kids that were affected it...and it’s more of a dialogue...a conversation...as opposed to a, oh you just got written up with a conduct report and you’re suspended for a day.

Do practices or things that are being defined as restorative within your building align with that definition? Do the responses that are happening fit with that description you just gave, where multiple people are involved and...
No. No. I feel like it still ends up with maybe our assistant principal handling it and then maybe sending an email that says this is what I did...you know...this is how I dealt with the situation with Johnn. He’ll be back in your classroom at 2. And certainly not...I feel like the big...the big unfortunate thing at our school is that so many people feel left out of the loop...you think about the specialists that these kids go to, and the playground supervisors and the lunchroom monitors, and like, they don’t have a clue. And I know this because I talk regularly and closely with a lot of these people, and they’re like, we have no idea what the plan is for Johnny. And I can tell that they are frustrated and maybe if they were part of that conversation, and part of the plan, it would really change their demeanor with the kid and their attitude...just about being at work in general.

What are your thoughts or feelings about restorative justice, based on your knowledge or definition of it, and whatever practices your building may be using and defining as restorative?

Well...I don’t think I’ve seen an example of restorative justice in my building, and only have my example for literature. But...I am completely open to it, I would just like to know more, and have more of a formal understanding and I feel like as a teacher, that cares deeply about my building, that that should be in a whole staff lesson, instruction, like...I can’t imagine that it’s something you could introduce and show a you tube video and be done in thirty minutes. And I think sometimes that is the way of many administrators...and this seems to me like, oh, over the summer we’re going to do a one-day retreat all around restorative justice or something...so that everybody has an understanding and everyone knows what it is going forward, and we’re better prepared, and we’ve read the book, and we get to discuss it as a group, and we’ve heard how different that looks for a 6th grade teacher as opposed to the lunch lady, as opposed to the playground monitor. Um...so, my feelings and thoughts around it are, I’m wide open. I just don’t know what it is. And there certainly hasn’t been a lot of follow through at my school, except for buying everyone a book about it, and saying we are going to do a book study on it and then that...uh...drops off the face of the earth.

If you were to try restorative justice, either within your classroom or within the school, what kind of support would you need?

I...well...that’s tricky...because the first thing I think of is a counselor. And knowing nothing, but I think that I would want the support of a counselor. But I have no faith in our counselor...and...uh...I just think she does a really poor job...so...if I had...so I would think a good counselor is someone I would want on my team. I would think either the vice principal or EA or principal or somebody would be somebody I would want on my team. I would certainly want somebody like a teaching partner in my grade band that I value their opinion and their feedback and um...to talk things through.

What about to get it up and running, what kind of support would you need?
Training. Some sort of formal training. I know someone had told me about a training that they went to for a few days that they really liked...and I can imagine...like, a professional person coming in and saying, this is what it is, this is what it looks like. Let me tell you about it. Let me...please come prepared having read this book or this article or whatever. But it’s...you know, it’s like learning a new math program. You can’t just drop it in someone’s lap and expect it to happen.

What do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, in order for restorative justice responses to be effective?

Well...I can imagine a team, and at our school I would imagine the PBIS team, but maybe a spin off of that team...or somebody, or a small group of people that are knowledgeable, that have been to the training...you know, I can imagine, in my situation...maybe like a primary teacher, and a teacher in 4th grade, and a teacher in 6th grade, and the school psychologist...people that feel quite comfortable with their understanding of restorative justice and how it’s implemented with different age groups and children and different noticeable behaviors. And then....like meeting routinely with that team. I think you need a place to go, to say...where’s the...where do I go for the answer? Yeah, I would imagine a team, and I could think that could be part of the PBIS team, maybe it’s a separate part, but it would have to be people that know what they’re doing...and...maybe I don’t know what I’m talking about, maybe they don’t have trainings in just restorative justice...but people that are knowledgeable and that I trust what they’re telling me, instead of people just saying, oh, well we do restorative justice and brushing that off.

I want to go back to something you mentioned at the beginning, which was around...you were talking about how you’ve done a 180 degree turn in your response to behavior or your thoughts around student behavior. You talked about your shift, and your light bulb moment, and like shifting your practice. Um...what would you recommend to teachers, or say to teachers, who maybe are of the same kind of attitude or thought process, that you had earlier in your career, if you were trying to kind of help them shift their ideas around it?

Probably the same thing that [teaching partner’s name] said to me, which was...you know, they spend seven hours of their day with us, they probably see...those kids probably see us more than they see their own parents or whoever their care giver is...and you’re modeling these behaviors for them, and you’re teaching them like...how to deal with crises and little moments and...and...it’s just...it’s part of what...I hate to say this...it’s part of what you signed up for.

Because I didn’t think it’s what I signed up for when I started. And maybe it’s not at other schools... but I think like, right now I have a student teacher...and I think that, if she...and she doesn’t seem like I was when I first started...but if I saw that in her, I would say, oh...you know, when that student stole that thing out of that kid’s desk, that’s a moment for us to like have a conversation. That’s a moment to have a conversation with that student and say, tell me a bit about this. And I’ll always be on your side and I want to support you, but you need to be honest with me. And the whole gear up that went into the conversation that I had with that student...and....you know, I thought about it at home that night, and on my way to school...and I
took my planning time to interact with these two students...and there was a lot of thought that
grew into something as simple as a squishy toy being stolen. Which, years ago, I would
have just been like...just don’t bring your stupid toys to school. But that’s not really the point.
The point is that she stole it, and then lied about it...so how can we help her...figure out like why
that was a bad choice, and what is she going to do to make it up to that student, and what is my
conversation with her going to look like? And...this could be a real pivotal moment in her life,
and...I’ve been trying to be metacognitive with my student teacher and tell her my whole thought
process behind it and...and...so I would do that. I would do exactly with what I’ve been doing
with my student teacher...which is, this is an opportunity to you know, help this student...instead
of saying, don’t bring your toys to school.

*If you were to come back to school and your principal was to say to the staff, we are starting
restorative justice. What initial questions would you have, or what would be running through
your head?*

I’d say um...I think we need to know what that is. I think we need to start a book study on the
book that you bought for everybody....I think we need to be really...um...intentional and
open...we need to meet consistently to talk about what this is, what it looks like, what it looks
like in different situations...um...how we, as an entire staff, can get on board with this, so that the
behaviors that I see in the lunchroom and the playground and in the library and in music and in
the classroom...like...I think we should all be on the same page for that. It can’t just happen in an
isolated moment in the classroom...with nobody else knowing what’s going on. And...I don’t
know what goes on, so...you better tell me what it...or give me...and I’ve been given the
resources...but carve out some time in the busy schedule that all educators have...and say, not
only did I give you the resources, but here is the time. We are going to delve into it...we are
going to understand it...whether that’s a two-day training in the summer, or every staff meeting
for two months is going to be devoted to the book study. Something needs to be...a plan needs to
be in place to help everybody understand what it is, what it looks like, who the support is for it.

*Um...if you were in charge of a school, or at your school, and you could design your own
response to behavior, and resources weren’t limited, and you could design what you think would
be the most effective response to behavior, what would some of the key things you would
consider have in place?*

I just...I often think about....the parents. Not their lack of involvement, but their lack of
understanding of what’s happening. I can think of so many examples in my mind right now,
where I think...if your mom, dad, whoever...saw this behavior on a daily basis, what would they
say? What would they think? I feel like the parents need to be a more integral part of supporting
the high needs kids that we have. Um...but...I feel like we need to have a trained...in my dream
world...some sort of really good trained specialist, that, that’s their job. That’s what I would
imagine the school counselor would have done...like, ok Johnny, here’s the behavior we are
seeing, and security has hauled you out three times this year...and I need to get you in here, and
Ms. [Teacher’s Name] and somebody from NAVOS or whoever...a big support network to try
and understand what’s going on there. And, I definitely think a link to home...and as much as a lot of it does happen in the school and some parents will say, whatever happens at school, stays at school....I think that if you really want to have success with that kid, there would have to be some really intentional link with the parent. I would want them in on it. I would want a good counselor. I would want someone trained on restorative policies...and I realize that would take a lot of time and money, but that...it would be...a critical element of a successful building.

*Is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs, thoughts, opinions regarding student behavior, discipline, suspensions or restorative justice that you would like to share or think would be helpful to this study?*

Um...I think...I mean...I just love, love, love my school and all the teachers there. And not a year goes by that I don’t see two, or three, or five super high needs, extreme behavior problem kids, and it all lands on the teacher....and there’s very little support. And I feel like this has happened to myself...very little support from administration or PBIS or whatever the team is that you would hope to go in. And...it...I think it just crushes teachers. I can think of so many teacher who’ve said like...I’m out, I’m done...this is the third time I’ve had a kid like this, or I’ve gotten no support from the office...and, I, I would rather be doing something else. I see how much it wears on teachers, and...and it...and it wore on me. I mean, I took a whole year off of teaching because I felt like...I love this job, but I am completely on my own here. And...I’ve gone to the school counselor...and I know it’s not all her fault, but I really can’t bare her...and her idea of supporting me was like touching base with a student once every three months to say, how’s it going? And I thought, that is not what I’m looking for here. And, just very little support...and I can think of teachers...and it just kind of breaks my heart. It just wears them down...it’s a big energy suck...and I see that...and I feel like I work with some of the best educators I could even imagine...devoted, hard-working, and thoughtful...and they’re completely exhausted...by the...by what’s going on in their classroom and the lack of support. And....maybe not knowing what to do, where to turn...I mean, my partner this year is a second year teacher. She is really struggling with a kid, and I don’t think....I mean, I think I’m the only place she’s gone...and it just wears on you every single day...and I think that that’s a real disservice for future and current educators. If we want people in this field, that’s usually the number one turn off I hear. It’s not the paperwork, it’s not the staff meetings...it’s...you know...I’m exhausted. I can’t take another year like this, I can’t take another class like this, I can’t take the lack of support. I can’t believe this kid is still in a gen ed classroom after being at our school for four years. That kind of thing. So, that kind of, that kind of weighs heavy for me.

*That support...how would you define that?*

I mean, at our school, I feel like they’ll point to our LRC teacher...is that what she’s called...and they’ll say, oh, well she’s going to teach a social skills group for 15 minutes once a week and that’s going to take care of that problem. Or they are going to go see our counselor, who I feel is not very effective...and often sends kids back to us saying like, oh, I just couldn’t get through to him. Or, I can’t work with her anymore, she’s too difficult. [laughs]. Like, that’s your job.
So...having a good team of people to go to, that would of course include the teacher in that....and
the follow through. I think the follow through kills us a lot of times at our school. There’s some
great ideas and great intentions and lovely people...but if you don’t follow through on
something...then...why introduce it in the first place?

Ok. Perfect. Thank you!

Teacher 5 [Pseudo Name Danielle]; Female; 49 years; 11 years teaching
12/27/17; 2:00 pm; Interviewed by Kaitlyn Spore
Currently teaching 1st and 2nd grade

KS: Ok, to start, can you state your name and acknowledge that you are being recorded.
5: My name is [Danielle] and I acknowledge that I am being recorded.

Ok, so the first one is, when a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? And
do you think your response is effective? And how do you know that?

Um...I guess I respond in a variety of ways, depending on...to be truthful, like, how, like...if I am
at the end of the rope with my patience or if it’s up until that point. Until I lose my patience,
either I ignore them, or I redirect them, or...um...compliment someone else who is doing the
desired behavior. Sorry, I feel kind of nervous...this is like a non-job interview. [laughs]

Oh...no worries.

Um...if I’ve reached the end of my rope, that sometimes I am probably a little more snappy than I
would like to be, and probably more consequence oriented than I would prefer to be.

What do you mean by more consequence oriented?

Um...just I guess...like, more punitive. Like...you’re going to stay in from recess, or, you need to
stop that or move away from that or you need to leave right now. You know, something like
that.

Ok. Um...how...do you think your response is effective and how do you know?

Most of the time I think my responses are effective with tier one and tier two-ish kids. With the
tier three kids, not always so much. They often times need more than just the general classroom
management that I provide. So then I try individualized plans for them...sometimes there are
parts of that that are successful, and parts of that that aren’t. Figuring out people’s motivations is
super complicated...and kids often have more than one function going on, so that’s also very
complicated to try and figure out...what form you need to meet their function.
You said, tier one, tier two, and tier three...everyone has different kind of definitions of those terms. How would you describe what tier one, tier two, and tier three means?

To be honest, the tier two and tier three are a little bit fuzzy to me...because over the years with different leadership, from different PDs about PBIS...I am kind of fuzzy on what...I don’t know the specific definitions of two and three, because they’ve gotten blurred by my leaders’ um...what’s the word I am looking for...their understandings of them, or their portrayals of them. So...I couldn’t actually tell you the book definition. But tier one seems to me to be...kids that are able to succeed with just small reminders, with the school-wide behavior management systems, positive reinforcement...um...plus the positive behavior school wide, like wish tickets. So that’s to me what tier one is. Tier two are the kids that need that little extra, and tier three kids are, to me, the kids that have a lot more severe behavior...that need an individualized plan. Sometimes the tier two kids do too...that’s why I’m not really sure. I have a couple of kids that need individualized plans right now, and I don’t know if they are technically tier two or tier three...all I know is that they are super disruptive and kids don’t feel safe and can’t teach with them being that disruptive.

How would you describe some of those tier two or tier three, whatever they might be, behaviors that you see in the classroom?

They really depend on the child...like, the ones that are most fresh in my memory are the ones I have currently...um...a lot of attention seeking behavior...whether it’s screaming, crying, yelling, being aggressive toward other children, like hitting, kicking, throwing things, tipping over desks...um...that sort of general acting out.

You said sometimes kind of leadership defines tier two and tier three, and it’s not always clear necessarily on what those are...um...are there specific plans in your school in place, for like, for instance, this is a tier one student, and this is something they did, and this is something we did in response. Or, this is a tier two or a tier three, and so here’s our tier two or tier three response. Are those tiers used to describe just the behaviors and the students, or are they used to describe the response to the behaviors as well?

I guess a little bit of both. Um...we’re still using a request for assistance. And it seems like each year the leadership learns a little more about what they are supposed to be doing and their expectations from the district...so I feel like that process has changed in the past couple of years...and....with our new EA I am realizing that...um...there may not be as many things in place as we thought that there were. At least, she is having a hard time finding functioning systems that are already in place that have to deal with...um...so, when you bring a child...when you need help, you put in the request for assistance...and I feel like if, you do need help...like, I actually had a meeting...but I don’t know if it was the tier two meeting or the tier three meeting...and I asked, and the people involved weren’t really sure...[laughs]...because they are on both teams...so...um...that definitely was in response to the student’s behavior. There was less of a label on the child and more of...these things are happening, this is the route we are going to take.
And that route was... it sounds like... meeting with the teacher and the people to...

To create a behavior plan.

Ok. What do you believe is the purpose of disciplining a student?

Well... I guess it depends on how you define discipline. I would hope discipline also means education... like, I don’t want a kid to just be... like... with my own son, I don’t want to have him do something wrong and get in trouble for it. I want him to understand what he did... and that it was not the right thing, and how to do that differently next time. And what does he need to do it differently next time. And if there are consequences... some things are really... they need some consequence... some things are natural consequences... like, if you push kids around all the time, you aren’t going to have any friends. Natural consequence. But other things are more difficult to have an automatic natural consequence to them. So I guess for discipline... I would want the child to understand what they did wrong, and know what to do right the next time, and if possible, make amends for it somehow, depending on what they’ve done.

Tell me more about making amends. What does that mean to you?

Um... if you were angry about something and you tore up the kid’s paper next to you just because you were pissed off and that kid happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time... then you would apologize, and maybe you would help them like, get a new paper, or like help them recreate what they had done. Something to acknowledge the fact that you made a mistake and try to help the person out who your behavior impacted.

Ok. Um...

Whether that means cleaning something in the classroom because you chose to draw on you know, all the desks, or... helping a student with something you broke of theirs... it could mean different things depending on the situation. Something to make up for what you did, that’s kind of how I view it.

Ok. Do you find that kids naturally know how to do that?

No. Definitely not. I mean, they know how to say I’m sorry, but often times that is not sincere, and not well done...

What have you found to help them through that process, in making amends or being sincere in their apology? Have you found anything in particular that has been helpful?

Waiting until they can think about it rationally... waiting until they are calm... when both people in the party are calm. Like, if they have done something to someone else, they need to apologize to
them, and the person they need to apologize to needs to be ready for that conversation as well.

So I guess, waiting until both parties are ready to have the conversation. Prior to the conversation, definitely talking to the person that needs to apologize and asking if they understand what they did and why that was hurtful...if it was hurtful to the person, and why it was hurtful...and what they are going to do next time. And usually practicing the apology with them. Often times, it works the other way around. Usually, the person who is transgressed against comes and you have to practice with them on like...telling the person what they did and how it made them feel.

_Do you find that is easy or hard for kids to do?

For both kids, hard. Some it’s easier...or easier than others. Like some kids aren’t able to keep their emotions out of it as much. Some kids have a really difficult time apologizing...sincerely...or.... um... initiating.... requesting an apology. It comes out more...sort of antagonistic. Like, if I’ve done something to you, you might be pissed off at me...and when you want an apology from me, it still sounds like you’re...you know what I mean. So, it could be difficult both ways.

Um...do you find that kids have the words to express how they’re feeling...or is it more prompting from a teacher or someone?

Naturally, I don’t think they have the words. I mean, some do, if they have people in their lives that talked to them about this before. Usually, you are coaching them and giving them words, or teaching the words in the classroom. Sometimes they use things from the social skills curriculum that we use.

Alright. Um...Ok...what do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline?
What do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?

Um...I guess they’re similar. I guess the role of a teacher is to support the student...help them...ideally help them learn ways to make positive choices and learn how to get what they need through positive avenues...and to be able to figure out, because each kid is different. And to help them understand that their actions have consequences to them, and not even that you get in trouble, but when you do things to other people, that is going to change the way that other people perceive you. I guess to teach them that their behavior is not in a vacuum. Like, what you do does affect other people. Children are very egotistical and self-centered, and have a hard time...so developmentally, a certain amount can really stick with a child.

What about an administrator?

I think an administrator needs to support the student...both the student and the teacher.

What does that look like?
Um...being able to recognize what the students’ behavior is...maybe coming up with alternatives to try and support them...but doing it in a way that supports the teacher, not doing it at cross purposes with the teacher.

Can tell me more about that? Maybe like an example of either working in conjunction with or working at cross purposes?

Yes. In my experience, I had an administrator that definitely worked at cross purposes. They had good ideas and how to make it...things to try in how to help the student...how to help support a student’s behavior...but would make changes to the plan and not inform everyone. So, for example, like I would be doing the thing that we had last agreed upon, with fidelity, and then...get in...well...trouble is a strong word...but clear displeasure...that I was doing that because why didn’t I do this? Because now we are doing Z instead of Y...but I didn’t know we were doing Z instead of Y. So, I think over the years I just learned to not bring my problems to the administration because it was more...not only did I have to deal with difficulties in the classroom, but then...I just needed....I wasn’t really getting any support, it just made it harder.

Ideally, what would support from an administrator look like then?

Working together and changing the plan...together.

What about responding to behavior? What would that look like ideally from an administrator?

Um...I guess to validate the teacher’s experience and the students’ experience around the difficult behavior.

Ok.

Not to minimize it...to recognize...that it’s actually happening and realize...I feel like a lot of time teachers feel like the behaviors don’t get supported...they just get minimized.

Um...what about like, let’s say you call the office and need support because there’s something going on in your classroom...and someone from the office comes in. What would like, be ideal for them to do? Both in the moment and then maybe the follow up as well?

In the moment, to take your word for it, that you do actually need help, and to respond as efficiently as they can. Uh...and then afterwards to let you know what they did with the child...to let you know if there were any consequences, if there needs to be any follow through, or saying, oh, I’ve already taken care of this.
What um...so let’s say, you mentioned a few behaviors like throwing down desks, or physically aggressive toward other students, what would you like administrators to do in those kind of circumstances?

To separate the child who is having destructive behavior from the rest of the kids. To give both parties a break.

And then um...when should that return happen and what should that return look like?

I guess the return should happen when they’re calm...when they’re able to re-enter and have some expectations around re-entering. It’s hard to put a time frame on that, because it’s different for different people.

Yeah. But kind of that...those factors are in place...the student is calm, there are expectations in place, what it’s going to look like when they walk back in the room, how you might re-enter...

And the child knows there is a consequence that’s already in place, or the teacher needs to talk, just so the child knows what the next step could be, or is.

Ok. Um...back when you were talking about the making amends piece...who do you think is responsible for leading the kids through that piece? Do you think that’s teacher, administrator, both?

Um...I would say both, because there are some problems that are small enough that an administrator would not need to get involved in the process of making amends....and other problems that are big enough. I just feel like if the problem is big enough that an administrator had to be involved in solving it, it...it might be appropriate for the administrator to also be involved in helping the child make amends.

Um...one other thing...you mentioned that you thought one of the roles of the teacher was to teach them...to teach students that your behavior impacts other people...you said that their behavior is not in a vacuum. How do you do that with kids? What does that look like?

I don’t really have one big plan for that. Um...definitely through conversation...whether it’s in the moment, or whether it’s through other teaching opportunities. I think whether it’s you’re reading a book and there are similar behaviors in the book that kids exhibit, and using that as an opportunity to talk about it...when this character did this...these people...just to try to work it into life as many ways as you can. [pause]. And...I don’t know what an actual restorative justice system would look like, but I would hope that it would be...there would be...um...a component to it...an educational component...whether it be a social skills curriculum or...just some intentionality around teaching kids or people that what you do impacts other people and it impacts you as well. I don’t know what that would look like, but I guess I would just hope that there would be that piece to it.
Um...what are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student discipline? Why or why not?

It’s tricky. Like, some behaviors, it seems like they’re pervasive...and...not getting better. Sometimes...and this feels terrible to say...but sometimes, if a parent is not involved, suspension helps them get involved...because it impacts their life...then...it kind of wakes them up sometimes and...they become more involved. [pause]. I don’t think suspension should be a choice for just like...average, every day behavior. Like, if you physically hurt somebody or if you have a gun...you know, those kind of big things are suspension...suspension worthy.

What about the difference between in-school suspension and out of school suspension? What’s your take on those things?

I think if it’s managed well, in school suspension is preferable. There definitely has to be a system to deal with children that are being suspended in school...not just parked in the office. Like, there has to be an actual space and a human that’s available. And specific plan and pieces on what you should actually do while in a school suspension. Like maybe a counseling piece, and maybe a homework piece...I don’t know what that would look like though.

If you were designing your own, like if you could design what in school suspension should include, or should look like, what would you, what would you do?

Um, like I was saying, there would be a specific place for it. Just a space so you’re not like, oh gosh, this person is suspended today, what room is available today? Where it’s not like a...not a of the moment trying to figure something out, like there’s a specific place, so that’s not a barrier.

I just worry that without having those things figured out, those barriers will either make the suspension not happen or make it not very productive. I mean I would rather have the child at school, because many times when they are at home they are not actually getting anything school. They might be doing something more harmful, or being subjected to something that’s more harmful, not being at school. But to answer your question...ideally, it would nice if there was someone they had to talk to...like a counselor...not even necessarily about that thing that they did that got them the suspension, but I think that should be part of it...but just someone to talk to about who they are, like what’s going on, like trying to dig deeper into this person and their behaviors. Some emotional support I guess.

What does it look like now?

I don’t know what in school suspension looks like right now.

Is it something that your school does?
Um...I think. I like...none of my students have been suspended this year, so...I mean I think that there’s some kids that have been sent home, like suspended from school for the remainder of the day. I’m not sure if some kids have had in school suspension. You would think I should know that, but I don’t. [chuckles]. I know our district does, but I don’t know like the expectation at each school. I know the expectation is people aren’t getting suspended out of school...that it’s dealt with in the building. But not if there’s really good systems in place. I mean, clearly not at my school, I don’t even know about it.

Um...*what are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think the efforts at reducing suspensions in your district or in your school have been effective? Why or why not?*

Personally, I don’t know. I don’t have any experience. They said it’s effective.

*Who’s they?*

They meaning the district. But I also know that people can look at...can be creative...people can take numbers and pitch it however they want to, but I don’t actually...I don’t know if it’s as successful as they say that it is.

*Is that a topic of conversation that is ever brought up in your school? Student behavior, discipline, consequences...anything around suspensions?*

Just that the district has a push to eliminate the suspensions out of school.

*But it hasn’t come up in terms of, what are we going to do in our building?*

Not that I’m aware of.

*Ok. Alright. The next question is, tell me what you know about restorative justice.*

I don’t know a lot. I’ve never read anything. What I do know I’ve pieced together from conversations. I... feel it’s probably a model that...doesn’t just believe that consequences have to be punitive...the consequence can be any sort of response or solution to the problem. I think people get fixated...and it’s easy to do...I’ve found myself doing that...when someone’s doing something negative that impacts other people, then you want something to happen...something visible, tangible, to happen to the person that’s causing the disruption. But that doesn’t always change the behavior. It makes the rest of us feel a little bit better...while they’re getting the consequence for what they’ve done. But that’s not necessarily going to be the thing that makes the person change.

*You said you can piece together from conversations....when have those conversations happened? Within your building?*
Yeah, I’d say at school.

What’s been said about it?

That it’s more of an approach on building relationships with the person and getting the person...who’s exhibiting the behavior....I don’t know...I guess this is my own take, I can say that anyone’s told me this, but my own feeling would be that that person would start to take some ownership of their actions...and also get supported in their actions...supported in their behavior. To realize what they’re doing, and to talk about why it’s happening and what they can do to change it. And so I feel like it’s more relationship based and less consequence based. Consequence in the usual sense of the word.

Has it been brought up at all as a staff or as PBIS team or...anything like that? Like, how has it been brought up in conversation before?

Um...this year it’s been brought up um...I think at a leadership meeting...and I think it’s been mentioned on the staff... there’s a book that a few people have been asked to read...we haven’t all read it yet...a book about carrots and sticks. I haven’t read it, so I can’t really tell you about it.

Who’s leading the conversation?

I would say our EA.

So the book was not for everyone?

They mentioned it to everyone, but I don’t think there was money to purchase one for everybody...so I think there’s been copies that you know have been pushed around.

Was there ever a you must read this, or we are going to talk about this, or was it more of a, here is this book if you would like to read it?

I feel like that maybe the leadership team, which I am a part of, was supposed to read it...but I don’t even remember if I was ever given a copy...so much happens before school.

Just in what you’ve learned or heard or know about restorative justice, what are your initial thoughts and feelings about it?

I feel like it’s something I would like to learn more about. I wish it was something we could try. I mean, I don’t really know what all it entails, but I like the idea of a system that helps develop relationships with kids and it digs deeper into why they are doing what they are doing...cause it...it seems that behavior is usually trying to solve something else, and figuring out what that thing is, is the part I’d like to see us focus on.
What do you feel like you guys focus on now?

I think we focus on what the problem is, but I just don’t think we have the resources, because a lot of the problems are things that happen at home, like, that are sourced from a child’s...from a child’s life. So...unless the child is in counseling, it’s difficult to try and fully address all the things that they may need. I mean because if...they’re in foster care and their dad’s in jail, there’s not a lot that one teacher can do to fix that...like you need a team.

Who would be on that team, ideally?

Ideally, like, the child would have a therapist. And not the school counselor, but an actual therapist that they see with some frequency...whether it’s out of school or on the premises, whatever, however it could work out...because I just feel like there’s so many kids that need emotional support from a good therapist. So I think a therapist. And I think like, a PBIS sort of...including the teacher and other people that are trained. And I don’t know what that training would be, but some sort of skills and strategies to try things. And ideally, if the parents were willing to get involved with it too...some things they can try at home. Or a caregiver...you can’t count on that though, but that would be ideal.

Ok. If you were to try restorative justice, either within your classroom or within your school, what support would you need?

I would need to know what restorative justice looks like, because the restorative justice that I’ve heard about from the news...from things we’ve talked about...all are for older kids...like, one of the kids that have some behavior issues in my classroom...I had mentioned to the EA that I was hoping to do like, because she’s had some experience with restorative justice, and I was eager to try that, and...she’d also read the carrot stick book, and felt that while those things were valuable, they wouldn’t be appropriate for this child, because this child just wasn’t um mature enough. It seems like for some of these practices, there has to be a certain level of maturity. And that’s what I’d have to understand...like, I don’t know...I just have no idea what works and at what age. Because prior to that, the things I’d been hearing, I was like, oh you can just do this for everybody. But it’s true, this particular child doesn’t take ownership of anything, he doesn’t see outside of himself. He really feels that his needs...that everyone is there for him. So I could understand when she said that having...that trying to have a conversation with someone else just wouldn’t be effective because he doesn’t...he thinks that we’re all here for him...and he doesn’t see the problem with his choices.

Did she or anyone else have any ideas on how to help him learn that? Learn how to take ownership?

It was more like, well, what can we come up with instead? So we’ve come up with other ways to address his behavior.
Um...

I think she does have conversations with him about how he wants to be perceived...like how he thinks people perceive him...so I think she’s trying to do that. Yes, you know, she’s awfully busy, so she doesn’t always have the chance to tell me all the things she’s been working on with him. So, I mean, I don’t know everything. I wouldn’t expect for her to repeat to me everything verbatim that she says to him...but I do think she talks with him about that.

That is kind of after he’s done something and working with him afterwards?

That, and there’s just times that he’s just checking in with her. There’s usually other times, not necessarily so much when he’s in trouble.

Ok.

This particular child is an attention seeker, so when’s he’s in trouble we...uh...limit the amount of attention he gets...because he’s figured out if he acts out and gets attention...and one on one attention, even though it’s negative, is more desirable than the attention being shared with other students. So most of the times the conversations happen with him just checking in.

Um...what do you think needs to be in place, either up front or going, for restorative justice responses to be effective?

First, some education, and a consistent definition of what restorative justice is. It seems very nebulous to me...like, I don’t know if there’s one um...one definition, one system of it...or if restorative justice is just this broad term that people can use however they want to. I sort of feel like restorative justice right now is like the same thing as...like when you go shopping, things are labeled as natural. That can mean such a wide variety. I want there to be...I would hope and want restorative justice to have a ...um...what’s the word? Legitimate definition. Something you can look at and say, oh, that’s not actually restorative justice because of this. But maybe it is just a nebulous word, just a catch all, but I would hope it wouldn’t be. I guess for, I think for it to be effective, it should have some sort of...criteria that it meets. I want it to have criteria so that it’s not just words...that people use. Because that’s what I feel like it is right now, it’s just words that we use because we don’t actually have a definition, have a system.

When you say we, are you referring to it being used at your school?

In my building.

Ok. So, education around what it is...what else would you need?
Systems for how we expect it to be used...like in the various grade levels...and what sort of behaviors. I am also curious like for which sort of behaviors it is most effective, and best supporting.

I'm curious...kind of going back to you saying it needs to have a legitimate definition and criteria it meets rather than just kind of words we are using...has it been tied to certain responses in your building? Like, this happened, this is what the response was...this is restorative, or this is not restorative?

Not in my experience. Maybe in other people’s experience, but not in mine. It’s just more like the label, like the label, like we should do restorative justice. We need to have a focus on restorative justice. I’m not really sure what that looks like.

Ok. If you were designing like...you are the leader of a school or the leader of a classroom, and you were to design your dream response to behavior, both on the preventative and response side, what would be factors you would consider or want in place, given that you would have any resource you needed?

On the preventative side, I’d want a leader who...I guess has a definition...just some sort of...for these...what behaviors constitute certain consequences, what behaviors constitute certain responses...and systems in place to deal with them...clear systems that everyone knows to access. And I’d also want to be...um...universal...not like when teacher A calls the office for a behavior, teacher A is denied, but when teacher B calls the office for the same behavior, teacher B is willingly helped. Like, I’d want consistency...so the teachers feel supported and the kids are supported. And I guess I don’t mean that there’s like this list of behaviors, and when you do this, this happens to you, but just some sort of, when this happens, and you’re experiencing difficulty, this is what you can do to get ideas, this is what you can do to get support. And these five things are our next steps. And in my dream world, I guess, there would be financial supports at the schools, so kids that have really severe behaviors are not impacting all the other kids. I know that sounds horrible.

What would the financial support be for in that situation?

Either to be able to put that student in an alternative setting, or to have someone to support the student in their behavior. Like one of my dreams would be that each building has one or two full time behavior techs...so that they could help do behavior plans on site...and help support kids. I’m not saying the teacher shouldn’t be involved in it, but an experienced...because when you do have them to support a behavior, you only have them for a certain window of time, and that time is not always enough time to figure out what’s making the kid tick, or how to fix the behavior. And during that window of time...um...a lot of it is put on the teacher to do, even though the behavior tech is there...and it’s really difficult to teach and manage behavior at the same time. So for behaviors that are severe enough and require a tech, my hope would be that the tech...could stay in there and support and be the primary one doing...the positive reinforcement.
I mean, the teacher needs to be involved in it too, but for some kids...the request is like every 30
seconds you are doing something to reinforce the child, and that’s very difficult to do and teach a
lesson. So anyway, my hope would be that there were behavior techs on site that could...follow
through with the child until there’s some improvement, or change...somehow help their behavior,
whether it’s resolved, or it’s not...to know what the next step would be. And I’d also hope that
there’s more training for the teachers. We keep getting all these things about um...kids that have
experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences...which I fully am on board with and
believe in...but nothing on the practical end of what we do as an educator who has a child in your
classroom that has trauma. Have you actually...what do you actually do in your classroom, what
do you need to change...I know for each child like the different trauma leads to like different
needs for them...but I keep hoping for answers. I mean, this is just an aside...but we had this one
training...and it was several sessions, and at the end, she asked us to brainstorm idea...I was like,
are you kidding me? I thought that was why you were here? Like, I already know that ACE’s
are real, like you didn’t need to spend six hours convincing me about ACEs. Like, I know they
are real. Spend six hours trying to help me help kids with ACEs. It would also be nice to have a
counselor on site, all the time. An effective counselor.

Alright. Um...the last question is just do you have anything else you would like to share about
student behavior, discipline, suspensions, or restorative justice that you would like to share or
you think would be helpful to this study?

Ideally, I would love to see parent education as part of the process. I feel that parents can
have...a tendency to want to see concrete punishment of a child who does something wrong to
their child. I think having them understand the shift would be important to success. If they don’t
believe in something...chances are good their child won’t believe in it either.

Ok. Perfect. Thank you.
Ok. I really don’t feel like my students outwardly misbehave in the classroom. Like...I...I feel like we spend a lot of time at the beginning of the year writing rules together, practicing them, and then...you know we do morning meeting every morning where we do a review of our guidelines and we learn habits of mind...and like emotional tools and...so I feel like for the most part, the kids are usually pretty, you know...well behaved in the classroom. When they do something like, you know break a digital citizenship rule, right like they do something inappropriate online or something like that...then I usually will talk with them individually and I’ll go over like...these are our digital citizenship guidelines and you broke this one. What do you think should be the consequences...what’s a logical consequence for that? And they can usually come up with their own consequences...and that’s basically what they do. Like sometimes it’s oh, I’m going to come in and do community service for whatever guideline I broke. Or, I’m going to write an apology letter. I kinda let them come up with it...um...in the classroom. So...so...that’s how I would respond. Do I think it’s effective? Yes, because it’s not me doing the...you know...giving the consequence, right. It’s them. And I spent a lot of time this year at the beginning of the year talking about ok, what’s a logical consequence? And we practiced. Like what would a logical consequence for this? What would be a logical consequence for that? So at this point, they know, and like, I don’t even have to assign their logical consequence, they just know and do it.

I think in my first couple of years of teaching I definitely...it was a lot more...you know, teacher controlled. And then I just did a lot of reading...and...thinking about management...I read a lot of Alphie Kohn books, I don’t know if you’re familiar with him...and uh...just came to the realization that I don’t...I didn’t think more authoritative...approach worked, and was too stressful for me. You know, it’s just too much on the teacher. And so I kinda went in the opposite direction, and I thought maybe that was a little too loose, and so I’ve just kind of found a happy medium. But I feel like this year, more than any year...I mean, I’ve taken away all rewards...I don’t give points, I don’t give rewards, I don’t do anything. I just...every single morning we do morning meeting. And every morning we tackle some....you know, we are doing this toolbox of emotional tools, and we looked at that...or we learn about growth mindset stances, or we learn about habits of mind and...so I just feel like building that community... when a student doesn’t follow a guideline, they almost feel like a sense of...guilt...that they’ve not done what they’re supposed to. Um...I don’t know if that’s effective...like, it’s not like I am making them feel guilty, but you can tell that they feel bad. So, yeah...I feel like this year...I’ve probably gone more back to my roots of really taking away all rewards and...no carrots and sticks at all. No. Nothing. And I’ve sort of done a little...I’ve always...other than the first few years of
teaching, I’ve always done it that way...but I think this year I’ve gone even more in that
direction. Like, I may have done in my tenth year of teaching.

Ok. You said the more authoritative approach doesn’t really work. What do you mean by that?
Why don’t you think it works?

I mean, you’re not teaching the kids how to self-manage...you’re not teaching the kids how to
like...emotional regulation tools. You’re not teaching them how to make their own decisions,
how to realize like, oh, I did this, so...well, this is going to happen because it’s a logical
consequence. Or like, hey, we have a community here and if I don’t do this it’s going to affect,
you know, everyone around me. If you’re the one assigning the punishment and making
decisions for them...then they’re never going to become...you know, they’re not going to become
productive, healthy citizens when they go out in the world.

Ok. What, in your morning meetings...and I know you mentioned a few things...but what kind of
things are in that, or what’s like the flow for that?

So, every morning, like...morning meeting has four components. There’s a greeting, so they
greet each other every morning. Um...we gather in a circle, and first we do a greeting.
Sometimes it’s like a game greeting, sometimes it’s a greeting in another language...um, you
know usually at like the beginning of the year I try and greet each other in each of their
languages. Um...you know we do sign language, we make games out of it...but every morning
they greet each other, and you know I’m a part of the circle too. I greet them when they are
coming in, but then I also greet them in the circle. Then we do a share...and they share
something about...themselves or about their feelings or it might be a mood meter. We’ll call out
where we are at on the mood meter...but they’re sharing with like...with their partner. And then
sometimes we share whole group. Then we do an activity. Sometimes it’s...it’s usually a game,
but it’s usually a game based on learning something from the game. So, either we are learning
about teamwork, we are learning about the habit of mind communicating clearly, or they’re
learning about persistence...or there’s usually...and so after that, we do a debrief. Ok, how can
we apply this to our day, to our academics, to our you know everyday school life. Um...and then
I....then there’s a message, where I...I have a letter that I read to them. And it’s just...I say, keep
this habit in mind, somewhere along the lines of, keep that habit in mind as we do this, this, and
this... and...um...here are some things upcoming today. Just, you know, wrapping up.

How long do those take about?

Uhh...probably longer than I’d like it to, but I just feel like it’s worth it. About 10 to 15 minutes.
I usually go through it pretty fast. You know at like this point they know the drill.

Ok. Um...what about outside of your class? Like, within your classroom you are kind of
describing this community and not seeing a lot of misbehavior. Do you see the same thing when
they are not in your classroom?
Uh...gosh, man, I’d love to.  I’d love it that wherever they go, they just like carry those things.  I mean the specialists usually say my kids are well behaved, or oh wow, they’re so much better this year than they were last year or whatever...so, in some respects, yes.  But one area where I really feel like they just don’t do well, especially this year...I have a lot of emotional boys...dramatic boys...is at recess.  That’s where it’s just...you know, every day something new happens.  Maybe not every day, but it feels like it.  Something new happens and it... I just find myself thinking, how can this like extend to recess?  Yes, I can go out and you know play games with them, but really, they need to be able to do this on their own.  Especially when they have a lot of free time.  Like, you know, in more structure environments, they tend to do fine...when they have all this free time...that’s...that’s the struggle.  So, in specialists, yes.  At recess...not always.

So, if something happens at recess, what’s the response like?  Is it on you, is it on someone else?

It’s usually handled by whichever recess...like, it might be an FYI, one of the supervisors out at recess...or, it’s handled by the EA.

And when you say handled, what happens?

She usually will call them in, and...you know, have a conversation with them...and, she kind of uses a restorative method...she doesn’t like, it’s not about punishment.  She has them think about what they did, who it affected, and what can we do next time.  She kind of has them, you know, go through like a problem-solving process.  With them, she talks with them about it.

Ok.  Have you had students in the past in which, you know, like the model you follow doesn’t seem to be successful?

Yeah, maybe one.  [chuckles].

Tell me about that a little bit.

Um...I just...he just was so....I don’t even know what the word is...he was just so far gone.  That, I mean, he probably misbehaved less with me [chuckles]...but it just was not satisfying for me.  Like it wasn’t...like, I usually feel like the kids are...you know, we are in there together, we get our work done, we help each other out...it’s like, we are serious about what we do, but we also have fun, and we play games and...he just...could not...get with any program.  So it was...it was bearable, but it was not enjoyable.  But I think that particular year was tough in general.  I had 30 boys.  And so many of them were kinda crazy.  And that’s the thing, when you teach 6th grade...and these things haven’t been done year after year after year...it’s like...starting at square one.  It’s hard to teach 6th grade when they come with so many bad habits.  Like, I’ve done 3rd, and 4th...I’ve done 5th...and I felt like, definitely my 3rd and 4th graders...like, behavior was rarely an issue.
Um...what do you think the purpose of disciplining a student is? And how would you define the word discipline?

So...I’m kind of...I don’t...

And maybe not just within your classroom, maybe within a school.

Yeah, I mean...I feel like, for me, if I’m going to have a conversation with a student about them breaking a digital citizenship guideline, or acting in a way that was inappropriate...then, the purpose is that they...understand...why it may not be appropriate, and who it affects, and how this isn’t going to help them in their...life...no, not in college, not in...their jobs, not in their personal relationship. So, like, my purpose is...so if I’m disciplining a student, for me...it’s...oh yes, you made a mistake. And yes, you need to learn from this mistake, and do things differently...and if you keep doing the same thing over and over again, it’s not a mistake. It’s just a bad habit, and you’ve got to...you got to get rid of that bad habit before it’s too late, you know. So, I...I feel like it’s to help them be...like, we want them to grow up and like have a job and have healthy personal relationships, so I think like, that’s my purpose in doing that.

What do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline? And what do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?

I think for me it’s...you know, in my classroom, it’s...it’s...it’s all me. Like I don’t feel like the administrator should be involved in that. Unless it’s like something dangerous. But I’ll be honest, in my 16 years of teaching, I’ve never had a kid like throw anything or throw a desk, or...I’ve like never had those things. You hear about it every day and all the time, but it’s just...it’s just never happened to me. And I’m not sure if it’s because like I teach 6th grade, or I’ve taught 6th grade for 10 years and...but...even is 3rd, 4th, and 5th...I’ve never had a student...who that many crazy things...so, in that respect, I feel like I should deal with it. The only time where that was a real challenge was that one year...[chuckles]...with that one kid...where I was like, I’m at the end of my rope. I don’t have enough patience to deal with this child. But you know, he is probably the only one in 16 years where I’ve had...had to have...administrative help with that...where I’ve actually went to the administration and said I need help. But really, for the most part I think it’s my job in the classroom. In specialist, I feel like I should help the specialists if the students are not behaving and hold them accountable, so like...deal with it...like also bring it up in my own space. And then...yeah, I feel like an administrator should get involved when it’s just really out of control and disrupting the learning of everyone else.

What does that look like? When you think the administrator should be involved, what do you think the administrator should be doing?
Um...that’s tough, but...I don’t think the administrator should be...I think the administrator should take the time to...problem solve with the child and decide...like hey, does this child need extra support? Like, therapy, or...come up with a behavior plan...help come up with a behavior plan. And other than that...I don’t feel like it should be babysitting, like they come to the office and they hang out and eat pretzels.

Alright. You said, most of this involves yourself and that you deal with most everything in your class in terms of student behavior...um...when you think about student behavior, what all does that encompass? Like, when you think about student behavior in general, what do you think about on both the proactive and the reactive side?

So...I feel...I...I feel like this year I am doing a lot of proactive. So, like every morning we are doing some morning meeting lesson that has to do with like some form of social and emotional learning. And then even in...you know, my reading or writing, we are constantly practicing...conversation skills, and how do you show someone that you...like...but yeah, we’ve been...I taught them behaviors of effective communication. They’ve conducted interviews and learned all about like, how do you show you care when you are interviewing someone...how do you...you know...so we spend a lot of time working on social skills throughout the day, and in morning meetings, when I like specifically teach habits of mind and the tools...or...regulating your behavior or growth mindset stances...but then I bring it up all the time...like all day I refer back to it. And then we recycle the same habits of mind, you know. Like, ok, we learned about listening with understanding and empathy, we’re going to bring it back again and do another activity with it. So it’s just...like...I feel like every day we do social and emotional learning and...and in everything that I do, I’m teaching them social skills and conversation skills and...collaborative skills and team work skills. So...I don’t know if I answered your question.

Yeah, that’s great. I am going to go back to something else you said. Um...you were saying that in your 16 years, you haven’t really had any of those explosive behaviors happen, like throwing desks type behaviors...but, you hear about it everyday. Can you tell me more about what you mean by, you hear about it everyday?

Well...in some of the lower grades, like 2nd grade, 1st grade, Kindergarten...even 3rd grade...we’ve had some kids who really...you know, are coined high flyers...and well, they kinda go nuts. [chuckles]. I don’t know how else to describe it. They throw things, they scream, they you know, recently one kid like hit the teacher...knocked her cell phone out of her hands, like physically lunged at her. He likes her...he did it because he was angry. So...I’ve never really had any student...attack me or anything like that, but I hear about it, especially in the younger grades...all the time.

Ok. So, knowing that you are not a teacher in those classrooms, but, if you were...I’m going to go back to the previous question. What do you think the role of the teacher is and what do you think the role of an administrator is?
Well I think that’s really...I mean, that’s like scary and disruptive...so I feel like the administrator...should definitely step in and get involved. I also think that...as a teacher...what...you put forth a certain...like, I very much make them responsible for their behaviors...and decisions...I put a lot on them, right. Like, I make sure there’s a lot of autonomy in the classroom. But, in the end, they know...like, don’t mess with me. I mean, one kid did...but even that...it was just...just me being tired. So I think...you can...be...warm and collaborative and whatever...but, you also as a teacher need to assert yourself and say, hey, we don’t mess around in here. So, I think it falls on both. You can’t be their best friend...you can’t be their buddy....but, you know, it’s that warm demander in that book culturally responsive...you have to be that. I think I’ve done much better this year at the warm part...[chuckles]...I’ve always been the demanding part. And I’ve made...I mean, we get along...I’ve always gotten along with my students for the most part...but I’m doing better with the warm part this year. I guess what I’m saying is, yes, it falls on both. If the kid is totally out of control, the administrator needs to step in. But I also feel like, you can control that if you have that sort of assertive stance...and...the sort of certain persona of...I’m not here to mess around, don’t mess around...You know, the kids might say, oh, you’re scary...right...but I think it’s more...it’s more...it’s more along the line of, oh, I know I can’t mess with you. [chuckles] And in that situation, you said the administrator should step in and help with that....similar to what you said earlier about when an administrator should step in, or does it look any different?

Um...I don’t feel like suspending kids or...I don’t feel like that’s going to help...or expelling the child...is gonna help, cause then what? They’re just going to go to another school and do the same thing. So, we certainly need to...we just need to give that kid a lot of extra help and support. I don’t think...it just can’t fall all on the teacher. Just cause we’ve got too many other students. I mean, ideally, we have two teachers in the classroom and we meet all their needs emotionally and academically, but that’s never going to happen here in the United States, or anywhere. So...I don’t...is it going to look different? They are going to need more support. But should it be this sort of harsh punishment, like suspension...I don’t think so.

With that...what are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student discipline? Why or why not?

I mean if a kid brings a gun to school [sighs]...then that’s really...[sighs]...that’s very serious. You can’t...I mean, something serious has to happen as a result. But, you can’t...again, you can’t...just expel the kid and say, ok, they’re just going to do it at another school. Like, I feel like something needs to be done to help the child. The problem is, at schools, we just don’t have enough resources to deal with that, you know...not at school. Like, in real life, we don’t have enough resources to deal...we don’t have enough police to deal with...we don’t have enough mental health counselors...it’s just...so I think it’s just an unfortunate result of our society...I don’t know if it’s just here in the United States, or everywhere, I don’t know. Um...I think suspension only when something really serious happens and you’re...and they’re endangering the lives of other kids. You know, you do not want a child to come to school and shoot other people.
So, that’s really serious...yes. Suspension. But suspension because you know a kid didn’t follow rules or...no. That’s ridiculous. And then suspension because a child brought marijuana? You know, I don’t know. That’s a tough one, especially since...yeah, marijuana is not legal for anyone under 21...or is it 18...or 21...um...that’s a tough one. But yeah, I believe suspension, used only sparingly, for really serious situations.

So you said bringing a gun to school...what else would you consider really serious?

Um...like, you know, seriously physically assaulting someone, you know. Like...hurting them, like they end up in the hospital. But I mean, I don’t even know if suspension would help there. You know, you suspend a kid, they’re at home...they play video games, they come back...so...the idea of suspension is just maybe...just maybe to get the message across, like, dude, you really messed up. This is serious. But, it needs to be followed up with...lots of sort of problem solving, and maybe visits from...like, we had a child who pulled the fire alarm and...our principal brought a...why can’t I think right now? A fire marshal...to come and talk with him. And I thought, that was good. Because you can actually talk to the child about, hey, when you do that, it costs us money, we’re taken away from other people who actually need us...like, that kind of stuff. So, I don’t think suspension actually solves anything...but maybe, just sends the message of wow, this is very serious.

Ok. What about in school suspension? What are your thoughts on that?

Yeah, if it was in school suspension and they’re getting the visit from the fire marshal, and they’re talking to...you know, getting some really....having good conversations with people about how what they did affected this and...that might mean later on in...later on in life this might mean this. Yes. But, in house suspension where they’re just sitting and doing work in the office instead of in the classroom...I don’t really understand the purpose of that. Cause half the time, they aren’t doing the work and they’re goofing off...I don’t really think that’s useful.

What are um...your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think the efforts at reducing suspensions within your district or your school have been effective? Why or why not?

I agree with reducing suspensions, especially for...stupid, you know...little things. I don’t know if it’s been effective. You know, like when you read the PR it’s like...oh, we’ve gone from this to this...and...I don’t know how to measure if it’s been effective. Like, how does one measure if it’s been effective? Does that mean...that the kid has...it would be effective if the child has changed their behavior. It’s not effective if it’s just like, oh, we’ve reduced suspensions just because we aren’t suspending kids anymore. Right? So...if it changes behavior, then yes. But I have no idea if within our district, reducing suspensions has meant that they’re doing other things in place of that...or, if it’s just...we aren’t going to suspend you. So, if it was we’re doing something in place of that, then, yeah, I would think it would be effective. If it’s just, we’re not going to suspend anymore, then...I don’t know if that’s effective.
What about in your building? Have you seen anything or...

I don’t feel like we’ve had a lot of suspensions this year...and...I don’t know if it’s been effective. I don’t know. I do know that like changing behavior takes a lot of time...like you don’t suspend a kid and do a few things and it’s done. Like, it takes a lot of time. I found myself getting frustrated somewhere around November because we were doing all this like social and emotional stuff mumbo jumbo every morning...every morning....and they were still getting in trouble out at recess...and I was like, why is nothing working? And, I think, I just realized, you know, it takes time. They’ve been this for what, like 5, 6, 7 years of their school career. It’s not going to just...because Ms. Baroudi is doing some social emotional lessons every morning. Maybe at the end of the year it will get better. I’ve noticed some...I’ve noticed some improvement, like regulating. Like, I have one student who has not gotten into any altercations in the last few months, at all...he just like walks away, and is like practicing some of the things that we’ve learned. So yeah...I don’t....I don’t know if it’s been effective at our school. If it changes behavior it would be...but I don’t know if it’s changing behavior.

I am going to go back to when I asked you about the effectiveness of suspension, and you said, you know, just sitting in the office, you don’t really understand the purpose of that. Is that something you’ve seen within your building, where someone is in school suspension...

Yeah. I mean, in school suspension has been, we give them a bunch of work...and they sit in the office and they get the work done for half a day...and that’s about it. I do know that two years ago when I had students that brought in marijuana to school...well, we don’t even know if it was marijuana...it could have been oregano...whatever it was...they sat in the office for half the day....and as far as I know, I had to give them a bunch of work and they did it. And they didn’t do it well. I mean, at least they would do it well...or better...if they were with me. [laughs]. I don’t know.

Do teachers in your building talk at all about suspension or discipline?

I have not heard anything...not this year at least. This year seems a little bit calmer than last year...in terms of behavior and kids in the office...a little. I think if you were the ladies in the office you might not agree, but...it seems a little calmer. Like, I see less screaming and throwing chairs in the conference room. You know, when I go to the office during planning, I don’t hear all the drama that was going on last year.

What was going on last year?

Like, there was one student...he was a Kindergartener and he’d been in the conference room and he’d take chairs and he’d throw the against the wall and he’d go nuts and scream and shout. There’s a lot less of that going on this year. And he...he has one on one support. And I’ve noticed they’ve worked hard...and I think it’s helped.
Ok. Tell me what you know about restorative justice.

So...I feel like...so the books that I’ve read...I usually use this series of books called the responsive classroom...and to me, that’s more about restorative justice than disciplining. So, you know...you write the rules, the guidelines together. There’s logical consequences...you give kids the tools to manage conflict. You know, you help them make the right decisions when they break the guidelines...it’s not about punishing them or keeping them in at recess...it’s rather like changing behavior...helping them be aware of their behavior and why it may not work...in the classroom, in school, in society. Um...I...I know that...I read this book, no more carrots and sticks...and it just said, rewards don’t work. I mean, giving points for this...oh, if you do this, I’ll give you this. That doesn’t work. It needs to be I teach them...give them the tools so that they can be emotionally, socially, and academically successful, you know. So...I, I don’t know if restorative justice is something else...you know, they’re always like changing the jargon in education, but to me it’s more about...it’s not that you’re punishing a student, but rather you’re working with them to change their behavior. And also understanding where they’re coming from, and kind of tapping into that as well. So like, culturally responsive teaching as well.

Ok. Has there been any conversation in your building about restorative justice?

Yeah. So at the beginning of the year we read the...or...during the summer...they asked us to read the culturally responsive teaching and the brain. And then...I loved the book, I thought it was great. So...there were a lot of great book recommendations in the book, so I went and bought the carrots and sticks book and...then I realized I had a ton of the books that were recommended in her book...like the responsive...like it’s like this responsive classroom series of book. So, like I do every summer, I just kind of went back and re-read them. So for me, it’s...I’ve...I was very conscious this year about, ok...no more punishment and rewards. Like, I know that doesn’t work. Or, it works to a certain degree...but it’s not going to help the kids in the long...in the end. It’s going to make my classroom, like...you know...I can control it how I might want it, but it’s not...it’s not going to impact them. I don’t know about...I don’t know about other classrooms to be honest. I feel like we read books and we discuss them, but then there’s no real follow up. And so, we read this culturally responsive book, which I loved, and we did all this work at the beginning of the year, in our DID days...but there’s been...there’s been PBIS follow up, but not really this sort of restorative practice and the responsive classroom. I don’t know what’s going on in other classrooms...I don’t know what systems are being used. It’s not the same in every classroom. And I’m...I’m thinking...newer teachers might be using the oh, change a color...from green to red...I don’t know what the colors are...[laughs]...I’ve never used that so. I don’t know. But...um...yeah, so. I know I’ve talked...I know I’ve thought a lot about it. And I know with my student teacher, we’ve talked a lot about it, because we do...he has to slowly start taking things over so now he does the morning meeting, so, we’re always talking about it. I...I don’t know that I’ve had conversations with other teachers about it.

So, as a building then you...read the culturally responsive teaching in the brain book at the beginning but nothing really since then?
Well...they gave us carrots and sticks...or no more carrots and sticks...and that is all about restorative practices...and, they gave everyone a copy. And I already had one, and I had read it, but...and I...but we haven’t discussed it. Like, there’s been no, please read this...we are going to discuss this. None of that. Or we are going to start implementing this...so...none of that. So, I don’t know if it’s coming up...in January...I have no idea. So I think the word restorative justice is thrown around. The word restorative practices is thrown around. They have us read these books. But then there’s no follow up. There’s follow up for me because I believe in it and I like to read and you know...it’s just...but there’s no follow up for the whole staff.

What are your thoughts and feelings about restorative justice? You talked about it a little bit already but...

I mean, yeah, like I said, the first couple of years I didn’t do that. It was like, this isn’t...this doesn’t feel right...like giving points or changing...well, giving points, I went back to that later on in my career because I once had a year where I had so many boys and they love competition, and that was a way to kind of motivate them...but, I wouldn’t do it today. You know...and uh...I did it last year...a little bit. Um...so no....yeah, I totally...I totally agree with it. I think you can have restorative practices, but still hold like strong, clear expectations. You can do both, you know. It should be both. It shouldn’t just be all restorative without any of...without that other part. Yeah...I’m totally for it. I don’t...punishment, like I said...we’ll get complacent kids, but it’s not going to help them be better human beings. It’s not going to help them be more independent. It’s not going to help them with their relationships. So, I don’t...plus it doesn’t feel right. [laughs]. I just feel guilty. I don’t need that kind of guilt every day. And, I’d rather put it on them. Not in a bad way...but like, hey, this and this...you broke this guideline, why is that a problem? How are you going to fix it? What are you going to do about it? Why is it important that you do this? Like...you know...

It sounds like you are incorporating some things already, but what would you say... but if someone else was implementing restorative justice in your classroom or school wide, what support would you need or would you think that teachers would need?

Um...I would love...I’d love for us to do similar things...like, the support that I would like is, let’s do similar things so that it’s not a new...a new teacher with new expectations every year. Let’s do similar things, because in the end it will be better for the kids. Um...I would love to have conversations with other teachers like, how’s this going? How’s it going? And what do you do for this situation? And how do you deal with this? And I’d love to do more reading about it. I mean, I bought a bunch of books and I read them, but....I mean, it’s hard to read like five different books about the topic and then like...implement everything on your own. It would be nice to have other people to try it out with. And so, like, I am trying it out...I’ve been trying it out...and every year I kind of change things a little bit and try something new...revert back to less restorative practices and then go back to it. But I think I’ll stay here...I don’t think I’ll go back to any sort of rewards system. I haven’t had to this year. Maybe with a different class, I don’t
know. But this year, they don’t work for points, they just work because they know it’s going to help them in the end, you know.

Um...what do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, for restorative justice responses to be effective?

Well...I think everybody needs to understand what it is exactly. Or, maybe not exactly, because I think it’s a lot of different things, right? But, so...if you’re going to give us a book and ask us to read it, we should be held accountable for reading it and then we should have discussions and then we should think about how are we going to make this happen at our school, as a whole school. And...but that requires administration to really...like...come up with...well, not just administration, the leadership team...come up with a good yearly...not just year long, a several years long plan. And if it starts slow, great. Like, this year, we are going to read, we are going to discuss. We are going to try a few things out. We are going to think about what worked, what didn’t. Next year, we’re going to put these things in place. Yeah, there needs to be like a plan. Just like for me in the classroom, I’m not just like, oh, today I’m going to try this. Maybe I’ll do this. No. I have a plan, like...and here’s my reading unit. It’s this, and this, and this, and then this. But there’s not plan for that, so...there’s just talk of it. Here’s a book. This is what we want to do at this school. But I feel like most PD is done that way. I haven’t been at any school in 16 years that has done it...has done like ongoing PD about the same topics...and really taking us through this whole cycle of learning of learning, practice, come back, revise, discuss, revise, try again.

Uh...Let’s say you were talking with a teacher who is not in the same place as you are at with these types of things...and is more maybe on how you described it as the authoritarian side. What maybe kinds of things would you say to that person...like, in having a conversation. Like, let’s say your school is implementing...does decide to implement what you are doing, or similar things, across the school...and there are people who are...who are opposed to it, or maybe not at the same readiness level. What are some important things you would share with them or would want them to know?

I think I would probably give them a book to read. The teacher across the hall from me is new and his management was...he was relying on yelling at the kids to do what he wanted. And so...the administration went in and said, oh, this and this need to happen. But, I just gave him this book that really spoke to me when I first started teaching...when I first started thinking about doing...you know, changing my classroom management. And it’s part of that Responsive...it’s called The Rules in School. And so I...I’d say hey, my first couple of years, management was a struggle. You know, I...it was like I...I felt like I needed to control everything and I felt like...and it was just much more authoritative. And I realized that...that’s just not going to benefit the kids...and that it was putting...and that it was very stressful as a teacher. I mean, who wants to go to school with that every day. You want to go, you want to enjoy teaching...have that relationship with the kids, and...um...so...hey, here’s a book that really helped me. And it’s a very readable book. It’s not...It’s a very practical book. So...I think I would...I think in the end I
would say, it’s better for the kids. You’ll have a longer and happier career if you...if you really focus on the classroom management. And...I’d also say classroom management is really important and...I don’t even know if classroom management is the right word anymore. You know, like that sense of community that you have...and the relationships that you...that you have with the kids is really important and will really set the tone for the rest of the year. If...you know...if you don’t figure it out earlier enough in the year, or earlier enough in your career, it’s going to be hard. It’s going to be a tough job. I think I would say you want the kids...you want to give them the skills and tools that they need so that they can be successful human beings in school and in life and...the other way is not going to give them those skills. You are just going to be controlling them so they do what you want them to do.

If you were...if your school was going to do something school wide around this, what would you think would be important for your administrator to consider, or to know, or to be thinking about? Or in any building?

Well...I think our particular administrator like throws the word restorative justice around...and...she clearly has some understanding of what it is...but I don’t know that the staff does. And just giving us a book to read...and having no follow up or discussion, is not going to make anyone else buy into it or even understand it. So, first of all, yes. Give us some books to read. Have discussions. Have some PD about it. Have some discussions about...what do we think? How do we feel? I mean, most schools, since the beginning of our...since the beginning of our school systems in the United States, have used a system of punishments and rewards...like, that’s classroom management. That’s Pavlovian...you know...So...to just expect that people are going to change overnight...the kids too, cause it’s a different way of thinking about it for them too, you know. Um...is...and just using the words is not going to be helpful. You have to have...you have to do readings, have discussions, have buy in...and then come up with a good plan for setting this into place. None of which has happened. And that word...of that phrase...has been thrown around now for like year three. You know, it’s been year three of like, oh restorative justice...restorative practices...ok. And what are you doing to make it happen? And what does it mean exactly? And you know, so...I don’t know.

Um...do you think your administrator would say that as a school you are doing restorative practices?

Probably. But, I think sometimes our administrator...I think, like, sometimes she might say like, oh yeah, yeah that’s what we are doing, or that’s what we are working on...without really understanding that...that it’s not that simple. [laughs]. It’s not just a matter of telling the PBIS team, ok, this is what we are doing. Or telling the leadership team. And no training. I don’t know...or maybe she’s more aware? I don’t know.

What do you think her definition of it is?
I think her definition of it is...is that there are...well, in conversation with her, her definition
is...well...maybe she’s evolved a little bit...but I know, two years ago, it was...no, we can’t have a
set of consequences that are going to be the same for all the kids.  No, we can’t have this plan
that says, if a kid does this, here are some things that are going to happen.  That’s not restorative
justice...and you know, it really has to be on a case by case basis and like requires conversation
and blah blah blah.  I mean, that’s what she would have said two years ago.  I think she’s a little
more aware now because I think she has done more reading.  But, I don’t think she knows how
to make it happen at the school...because, there hasn’t been any conversation at the school, as a
staff.  There hasn’t been any...and it’s still...and I was on the PBIS team and there would be like,
these arguments.  We’d spend our whole time...our PBIS 45 minutes in the morning...arguing
about the list of....no, we can’t have like, if a kid does this, we respond like this.  No.  No, I don’t
like.  I don’t want.  I don’t agree with that.  It needs to be on a case by case basis.  But, the
problem is, with the case by case basis....not that I disagree with that.  I don’t disagree with that.
I agree with that...yes, not all situations are the same.  And yeah, you want to treat them like
human beings.  You want to help them.  But, there has to still be a plan, something in place,
some training, you know.  It’s going to take a long time...to like train teachers how to also
be...how to do this.  How to have conversations about this...how to find the time to do this.  So,
you know, I don’t think...I think her definition of restorative justice has maybe evolved from
year one or year two, but...but she hasn’t expressed that or shared that or...with the staff.

So then what does it look like in practice in your building right now?

Nothing.  Ok.  Ruler.  Ruler.  Ok, so we do RULER, so I guess that’s restorative.  Yes, that’s
true.  We’re teaching kids how to regulate...how to identify their feelings and regulate their
emotions.  So, yeah, I can see that Ruler is part of our toolbox...our toolbox of restorative
practices...but...yeah, it hasn’t been strongly identified.  Like, if Ruler is our restorative practices,
then, she needs to do a better job with following up with that as well...because charter, we’re
good.  Mood Meter, we’re good.  Meta Moment, some of us.  Blueprint...like, if our blueprint is
going to be our problem solving...what’s the word...framework...then we should be practicing
blueprint.  We should be doing it at PDs.  We should be uh...asked...ok, I want you to do the
blueprint framework with a student...in the next couple of weeks, and then when we meet again
on Wednesday we are going to talk about how it went, you know?  Like, there’s just no follow
up.  This is the initial training of what these four components are, but no follow up.  So, ok...I
think that maybe her definition of restorative practice is...we are doing Ruler.

Are any responses to behavior being defined as restorative?  Are there situations that have
happened where a response is done and then it’s either labeled, oh that was a restorative
response or that wasn’t a restorative response?

Well the blueprint is more...is more problem solving...right.  But, no.  So I think our EA...I’ve
seen it happen.  Like, there was an incident in PE between two students...two of my
students...and the PE teacher, and myself, and the two students, and her...we went through this
problem solving framework.  And I liked it.  I thought it was great.  Each of us could talk about
how we saw the situation, or how we felt about the situation...you know. And then we came up
with a plan and then we checked in a couple of weeks later. And that issues has...has not come
up...there was one more issue, but then, after that we met again, and then it was gone. So, I
would say that’s restorative practice right. I don’t know if she used the words restorative
practice, but she said, this is not about punishing you...I’m...I’m going to using this process as a
way to have you think about your behavior...think about how we’re going to change it...and think
about how we’re going to support you.

What about other teachers? Have you heard anything from other teachers about restorative
practices?

No...I guess I need to talk to other teachers more. [laughs]. No...no I haven’t. I feel like the
teachers I talk to, kind of handle their own behavior issues, you know. Like the teachers I hang
out with or talk with, they just handle it on their own. I feel like the EA...I feel like that’s her
approach. And it’s great. I love it. Compared to last year.

Tell me more about last year.

Last year we had an EA that was...not good. And she was...not qualified for the job. And she
didn’t how to deal with behavior issues or how to talk to the kids. Nor did she know how to deal
with adults. Yeah, she was very ineffective. And, I think she did some damage to relationships.
She was a mess. Very ineffective. Like, she’d talk to the kids all sweet and everything in front
of everyone....then you’d see her behind closed doors talking to the kid like...like they were a
piece of dirt. It was like....umm...multiple personalities. It was like, be one way. Don’t be that
way and pretend you are this way, when you are really this way. I feel like the EA this year is
very...she’s firm, but she’s nice...and she has this problem solving, sort of restorative justice way
of dealing with....when kids break rules.

The last question is...is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs, thoughts,
or opinions regarding student behavior, discipline, suspensions, or restorative justice that you
would like to share or that you think would be helpful to this study?

I think I’ve said a lot. [laughs]

Ok. Thank you so much.
Ok, so the first one is, when a student misbehaves in your classroom, how do you respond? And do you think your response is effective? And how do you know that?

Um...so...I guess like...initially, I would try to...um...respond um...so I think about this as like my goals of what would happen. I would want my response to be something that is effective. Um...so like, redirection to try and get are...redirect whatever behavior they are exhibiting or showing. And I don’t know, it’s like...it changes...a lot, like depending on where I am and what’s going on in the class and who’s doing it and stuff like that. So...um...stuff like...talking at the carpet while I am teaching a lesson, that’s kinda like a whole class reminder...like, oh remember, we need to make sure our voices are off. And...so yeah, like...I have some of these posters up that like say these are the carpet expectations or whatever...and I kinda try to reference those throughout that. Umm...if it’s like...sometimes even it can be effective for a little bit, sometimes it isn’t you know. It depends on like the time of day, and what’s going on. [laughs].

Like it can be effective but...um...the kids I am working with right now need a lot of those responses and I don’t know if like the reminder of that is particularly effective in that scenario with them. Um...and I guess, the talking at the carpet scenario, I would know it was effective if kids kinda stopped talking...so...that one’s kind of an easy one to see if it was effective or not. Are there like other kinds of ones?

Um...just like in general...any kind of misbehavior...whether it’s minor or more severe.

Yeah, like, with the minor behaviors...um...I am working on kind of ignoring some of those...you know that don’t seem to like...only be effecting like that one kid, that doesn’t seem to be affecting...I don’t want that to be something that takes my attention away from the rest of the class. I mean, you could try something like, give them a look, like hey. You need to stop that. Um...if it is between a couple of kids, try to separate them would kinda be my first step with that. Um...if it’s like one kid that’s misbehaving and seems to be getting like very amped up. I’m trying to use...like we do the Ruler...and I’m trying to use that...I’m trying to use like the meta moment poster I have and like have them go over and like stand with it and kinda look at it and let them think through those steps. Um, I would say that isn’t like super effective because I don’t think I’ve like really...walked through the steps with the kids on that, and so like...that is kind of like on me and teaching that and how I want to see that in my class. Um...so yeah. I guess, the easiest way for me to know if my redirection, or whatever my response was, was effective is if the behavior stops...and if they...um, I don’t know...I guess I have a low expectation of having them stop for the moment or for a period of time, but it doesn’t like cease completely, you know.

Are there set consequences, or is it more of the redirection and talking with them?

It’s more of the redirection and talking with them. Consequences...um...you know, like, I’ve called home a couple of times over a few like long standing things. Um...I...I don’t really like...I don’t really try and keep kids from recess or stuff like that. Um...I mean, it’s also part of like my break time too. And sometimes I think you know that like I need to reset and feel better about it.
Like, so I can get back. And a lot of kids...they are in second grade, they need recess. And so, I don’t have...well, the system we are doing...we are starting to do this data collection sort of thing, like a... like, they are like minor notes...like if there’s a minor misbehavior, they’re like notes. Like if you do a minor redirection and you write it down and like what you did, then you give it to the EA. Um...so she can kinda collect the data throughout the classrooms. But I don’t....there’s not really any action that goes with that. It’s like, if you want it to be handled by someone else, like the principal or something, then you can check that, but...minor things that you have a conversation with the student and you just send it. But yeah, I don’t really have any consequences.

Um...so the next one is, what do you think the purpose of disciplining a student is? And I also want to ask, how would you define discipline?

Um...I mean I guess...discipline seems more like...more of like this hard core thing, like you need this discipline...um, so I...I like...I mean I think like the purpose of discipline a student at school is that you want it to stop, you want them to behave. But, like...the word discipline seems kinda like...like Draconian or something. Um...so, yeah.

What do you think is like the purpose of re-directing student behavior?

Um...to...have them change their behavior to the desired behavior. Um...you know, sit with their body calm facing the speaker, to not be using the time on the carpet to like tie and untie their shoes and talk with the person next to you. You know, stuff like that. The purpose is to...for redirection or reminding is to change their behavior to what you expect them to be doing.

Alright. What do you think the role of a teacher is in student behavior and discipline? What do you think the role of an administrator is in student behavior and discipline?

I think the role of the teacher in student behavior and discipline is um...I think a lot of that is like the culture of the classroom and like the...expectations of having the way that your classroom works as a community known and...yeah, known by all the students and probably for all the student to know it. So like, as a teacher I need to be like...diligent in the getting the students to know what are like appropriate behaviors. So I guess, there are appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, and they should know like what the appropriate and the inappropriate behavior are and like what they look like in the classroom. And in different aspects of the school. So like, walking in a line, the appropriate behavior looks like this...the inappropriate behavior is like this. And then like, knowing that the appropriate behaviors...the reason we want to see the appropriate behaviors is because like...they will....you know...they are expected to lead to more positive things, like you have more time to do this if we...if we are displaying the positive behaviors it means we are ready to do this and we are ready to go, whereas the inappropriate behaviors are the ones that need that redirection and take that time. Which I think as the teacher, it’s important to have the students and...to have the students and have everyone in the class like know what the expected behaviors are. Um...and....um....I think the...like, the teacher’s role is
like...discipline...things that aren’t disrupting the learning or aren’t interfering with others in the
classroom are like things that hopefully you can handle, like you can handle in the classroom.
Like, you know, different things you can...you know different consequences and things like that
in the classroom. Like, you know, like...you have to walk back with me from recess to talk about
whatever you were doing wrong and how you are going to change it. You know, just like taking
the time that was wasted or used in a poor form or a poor way to like, talk about what you did
and figure out maybe like a quick plan to maybe not do that. Whereas, the administrator role in
student behavior and discipline...I think the administrator should kind of set like the whole
school culture and have kind of like those guidelines for success or whatever. You know, kind
of have that whole overarching thing of what behavior stuff is like expected in the school.
Because it could be different for every teacher, like every teacher is not the same. Teachers
handle things different ways or handle different...have different changes or tweaks to things. But
the overall whole school culture or...like...I think the administrator just needs to come up with
the plan for like the whole school so we can see that all. Then I think like discipline for the
administrator is like...that...the more extreme behaviors and misbehaviors in class that...like have
a pattern of going in...that aren’t like a one time thing where like this kid is just upset in the
moment and did something...they show like a pattern with struggling or not showing like the
mass behavior that you are expecting. That would be something the administrator...the
administrator would be more involved with or deal with more.

Ok. When you say they would deal with it more, what does that mean? What does that look like
ideally? Like, if you wanted the help of an administrator with something with a student, what
would you ideally want that to look like?

Um...I would that to look like a...meeting...like meeting with the student, kind of hearing like
what they...what’s going on with them. Umm...I would like...suggestions from the administrator
on ways to like help the student in the classroom and how to work with them. So kind of...more
of like see support from the administrator in working with kids that need extra support. Um...I
also think that...they could do more communication with the parents. Um, I guess teachers, we
should be communicating with parents too...you know, but...like the more larger issues...that
belongs in the administrator category I think. So yeah. I guess I would like...to...like, you go to
the administrator with the issue...and like asking for help...for that to like come back with like
open communication with the administrator. Maybe the family too, and maybe like start a team I
guess for the kid.

You said at the beginning of that question that like whatever your expected behaviors were in
your classroom...how do you as a teacher come up with that? Are those expectations within the
classroom different than whole school? How does that work? What is the process of defining
those expectations?

So...the whole school expectations are posted and talked about in the classroom. You know, we
kind of have like those four...things we look for at [School Name]. And then...within
those...those kind of help...well some of the...some of the buzz words with that, like...show
respect and language in there...so you know, um...I would say that...like...um...for me...the...the behaviors that you expect to see in the whole school kind of help me implement what I want to see in the classroom. But then, like...and then it kind of gets to where like...I play with them a little bit...and I can see what like works in the classroom and what...and like what really...um...like what works in the classroom. Like, do they need to change a little bit? Do they...need to um...need to change at all or something like that.

Are classroom expectations in each classroom across the school...are they similar or different?

They’re...they’re different. You know we have like...we have a charter. I started like a month in so like I’m still catching up. But, yeah, every classroom has a charter. And they generally hit the same things...like...I want to feel safe. I want to feel respected. Things like that, and how to feel those ways, things like that. And what...what to do to get back to feeling those ways. And then I guess...so the charters are pretty similar...in most senses. Um...I guess then...then it’s just the teacher’s own like personal...and what they...what they expect it to look and sound like in their classrooms.

Ok...you also said something about your classroom culture and community. How do you build or establish your classroom culture?

Uh...I mean...I think it’s an ongoing thing of like...I mean, you have to build a relationship with these students...students have to build relationship with themselves in the classroom. I think it’s like a lot getting to know each other and like...um...like...there has to be a level of trust in the classroom....especially like, from student to teacher they have to be like...able to trust that you are going to like...be consistent and...you know there for them, and care about them. Um...and that you like them. I think they need to know that you like them. Um...yeah. So that they can see that...that you have...that you have all this care for them and that you...that you want them to...you know you want the classroom to be a community where people can talk to each other and share things...and stuff like that. And not be...and not be...and not be not be something. A place like, where people feel comfortable to be themselves and to like...if you don’t want to do something...if you don’t want to like share this part about you, you don’t have to. It’s just...just like things like that. I guess comfort is a big thing in there.

Ok. What are your thoughts on suspension? Do you agree with suspension as a form of student discipline? Why or why not?

I don’t know. I feel like...from kids I’ve known, people I’ve known...that have gotten suspended...a lot of people that get suspended are kids...are people that need to be in school. And like...I think it’s...it’s not just a ...it’s not just a school thing that they are acting out against. I don’t know...I don’t really like...I don’t really agree with it as a form of student discipline. I think it’s...it’s a pretty severe form of punishment to get kicked out of school for a couple of days for doing something. I think...there’s like in school suspension where like the kid will spend the day with like the EA or something...and they’re doing work and they’re at school. And it’s not
like... you’re not here because... you did something. But I guess, like, you want them to
know... like if it’s a severe thing that resulted in a suspension, you want them to know that
like... that’s not acceptable. But also, like, it seems like... you’re like 8 or 9 or 10. It seems like
a lot of punishment for that.

Ok... um... you said that... that you think that sometimes from what you’ve seen, that the kids that
are often suspended are the kids that should be in school. Can you tell me more about that?

I mean like... kids who are... acting out and um... that... might not have a lot of like structure or
security or consistency outside of school... they find that at school. And then... you know... I’ve
heard that... that kids act out... because they trust the people that they are acting out in front of and
that they trust that they care... and don’t want them to do that. Um... and I think that... if that is the
case... like... they aren’t thinking like that far ahead. They just like want to see someone care
about them... and so... they act out... in over the top ways that lead to that.

Is that something you’ve seen with kids you’ve worked with?

Um... not like... personally worked with. No one in my class yet. Just... like... kids at schools I’ve
been at. Things like that, yeah.

Um... ok... Can you tell me a little bit more about what in school suspension looks like in your
building? You mentioned that maybe that would be a better... I don’t know if you used better...

A more agreeable way...

Yeah. More agreeable than out of school. Can you tell me what that looks like or what you
know about it?

Yeah... um... what I’ve seen... I know the kid spends the day with the EA... and is doing work while
they’re there. I’m assuming they are talking too... and meeting. Maybe their parents come in and
they meet... things like that. I guess I don’t really know too much.

So it hasn’t been defined or explained of like, this is what we do with an in school suspension?

No. No, it hasn’t.

Ok. Um... what are your thoughts on reducing suspensions? Do you think efforts at reducing
suspensions within your district or school have been effective?

Um... I don’t know much about the efforts at reducing suspensions within the district. I’ve just
heard like... about like... zero out of school suspensions or whatever... by... by like whatever year.
But... um... I mean I think that working to reduce suspensions is something to work for. I think
that’s a good... a good... a good idea or goal. Or a good plan to work for. Um... I don’t know. I
guess like efforts at that like being ineffective if you’re like...solely...your whole goal is like not to suspend kids and to like...keep them somewhere. Things like that. Which I guess like in school suspension could end up coming. Like just keep them in school and just do this. But like...yeah...I don’t really...know...I mean, I’m for reducing suspensions. But, other than that, I don’t really know too much about reducing them...or what the efforts are.

Has it been brought up at your school at all? You said you read something about a goal for out of school suspensions.

Yeah...but...it hasn’t really been talked about. I mean...I know that...that discipline is something...well not discipline, student behavior...student behavior is something that is...come up in like...union meetings. And that’s something that like the union reps and the [Principal’s Name] are talking about. Um...but I don’t know where those have gone really.

Ok...um...so...can you tell me a little bit more about that? Like, student behavior has come up in union meetings...my first thought when I hear union is like...something of concern. Are there concerns about student behavior?

Yes. So yes...concerns in several...several...I think it’s several grade levels about student behavior...in the classrooms and like...some teachers have been physically attacked by students and...kind of...like...what the...where the policies are on like...here’s a teacher that is hit in the classroom...and what are the policies on keeping a teacher safe in the classroom...or keeping the students safe in the classroom...and like, what sort of...work can we do with that. So, yeah.

That’s the gist of it I think.

So some concerns around the behaviors teachers are seeing and some concern around safety?

Yeah....definitely concerns around safety.

Ok. Any other things related to behavior that’s been brought up school wide or anything?

None that I can think of right now.

Ok. The next question is...tell me just anything you know about restorative justice.

What I know is what I briefly read online a little bit ago...[laughs]. Um...but it is...when two parties are not getting along and have wronged each other somehow...bringing them together to have conversations and discuss solutions. Um...um...that’s kind of all I can think of.

That’s fine. Have you heard that term used at all in your building?

Not in this building. I think I heard it when I was in school...because it seemed familiar.
Um...ok. So...just with that um...knowledge that you have...what are your initial thoughts and feelings about restorative justice?

Um...I mean I think it...it...I like the sound of it. It seems like...like...if you are getting more of the people involved...if you are getting more than just the people...if you are getting the people around them that like...you know...know they care about them...then...you know...you build a bigger team for that. As long as it is very structured. I can imagine that kids and...parents...come together...and not having the most productive meeting that way. I guess it could be like...very emotional. So having it be like very structured and well known...like what’s going to happen and what like...the steps and the ideas around it like...are. Um...seems like it would be...it could be...like...you know like pretty profound or heavy or have like a lot more meaning than just like meeting with two kids and talking to them or just like calling a parent on the phone. It seems like...it seems like it would be pretty powerful.

Ok. Um...let’s say you were going to try it in your classroom or your school. What kind of supports would you need?

Um...I would definitely want to read a lot about it. Like...have like a shared book that like the whole staff reads or maybe...you know...send articles to families and things like that. So that way everyone else has a chance to read and kind of like, get their head around the ideas and what...and what restorative justice is. I think that would be first and then maybe like...reaching out to families and doing like workshops or something. You could do like teacher parent conferences or something like that...that you could really make it known that this is what the school is going to try, this is how we are going to do it. Um...like...like here’s the plan. Here’s language around it. Here are the words that like we use with restorative justice. Like here’s the role of each person. Having a very strong grasp of what it is before trying it...because I think a lot of things like...well...it’s my first year, so a lot of things...I’m like what? I am trying to do that...but really, there are just like too many things in my head right now.

Right. Ok. Um...this is maybe a similar question. What do you think needs to be in place, either up front or ongoing, for restorative justice responses to be effective? What would you need as a teacher with this kind of new thing?

Definitely like...readings and stuff about it...videos...like ways to learn about it. Um...having...people who are well...well-knowledge in it...maybe do some of those readings or teachings or things like that to have like experts. I think kind of...ongoing...like...like ongoing reminders of what it is...what’s going on...ongoing...I mean I think of things like this you really need to like...frontload it. So you have like all of the information at the start so you like know what it is and you know what it is and are in agreement of what it is. And then like, continuing to touch base and see that everyone knows...and remembers what it is. I feel like that’s the positive way to go.
Ok. I'm curious...so being a first year teacher...what's been communicated to you...is there a behavior or response plan at your school?

Um...yeah...it is...um...PBIS is the acronym. I don’t know what the acronym stands for. There’s three tiers. Tier one I think is like the lowest...like your classroom...like all the things you handle in your classroom. Like talking on the carpet. Tier two is like...um...the um...this starts to be more um...more people working on it. Like...you might have a behavior chart or something like that. And then like...tier three is the more severe needs. This is like needs one on one or something like that. I think that’s the way it goes. And so...and I think that...the...from my understanding...the goal is to like move kids away or move kids down the tiers if they get up there. Like work with them...like you have a behavior chart and you’ve shown for like six months that you are improving so you can move...like down. I think that’s like the goal of those.

How would you get the support if you had a student in your class and you felt like you needed more than what you had? How would you do that?

Um...reaching out to...to [Principal’s Name] or [EA’s Name]. You have to like...there are like documentation things you need to do...like...document on something like when it’s happening. So you have some data to bring to the....there’s a PBIS team at school with like some different teachers and people. You have to have some data to bring to that so they can kind of like start to formulate a plan with that. But I think like...yeah... the principal or the EA would be who I think you would go to.

Ok. Let’s say there’s an altercation in your classroom that is something big, or that you would need help in the moment...um...what’s the protocol or process that your school follows?

Um...probably call the office for help. That’s my understanding.

And then what happens? Do you know?

And then...the EA usually comes to the classroom. And then...if the student needs to leave, she’ll take them out. And we have like pods...so she can like talk to them in the pods. She’s usually the one I see answer the call.

Ok. Um...if you were a leader of a school, and you were going to design your dream behavior system, both on the preventative and response side...what are some key factors you would consider, or some things that you would really want in place? Given that you have any resource you need.

Um...I guess like...I guess I would like to um...consider like...who the students are...like, what are their experiences with the behavior. Like...or like...common expectations they have or like common expectations their families have. Like...what are they kind of used to in that sense.

And...um...I think kind of like...have...like...the whole like school...like have buy in from the
staff. Um...I guess having like...kind of taking advice and bits and pieces from like everyone involved. Like...what do teachers need to see in their classrooms...to have them like...feel successful. What do students and families want to see in the classrooms to have them like feel successful...and...I guess kind of ongoing evaluation of that and seeing if things are working or not. The willingness to adapt.

Alright. My last question is...is there anything else you would like to share about your beliefs, thoughts, or opinions about student behavior, discipline, suspensions, or restorative justice that you would like to share or you think would be helpful to this study?

I can’t think of anything.

Is there anything you would want an administrator to know while they are thinking about or designing their plans around student behavior or discipline?

Um...I think showing that things look different at different ages...at different age groups. I started the year at 6th grade and then moved to 2nd grade, so there was a big shift in like what I could expect the kids to do....so that took a while to get used to and kind of...figure out. So I kind of...like...yeah...Like different...like age appropriate or developmentally appropriate things. Like what would that look like at different ages or grades or developmental stages. Yeah.

Ok. Alright. Thank you so much.